

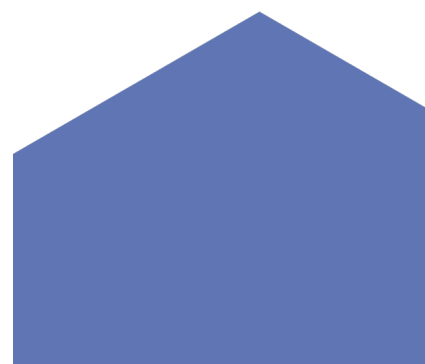
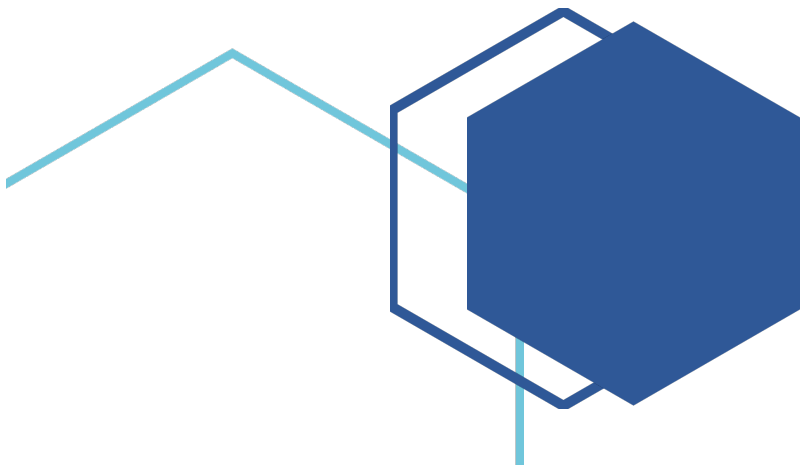
We acknowledge that we live, work and place on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Syilx People of the Okanagan Nation, and we are grateful to be here.



Civic Education Toolkit

South Okanagan – Similkameen

This Toolkit was developed by the South Okanagan-Similkameen Local Immigration Partnership (SOSLIP) with the South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS) to support civic engagement of newcomers in the region.



Civic Education Toolkit

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Why is Civic Literacy Important?

Adapted from “Investing in Canadians’ Civic Literacy: An Answer to Fake news and Disinformation” by The Samara Centre for Democracy

The only reliable defence against the threats, such as cyber security attacks and fake news, is an engaged, informed and resilient society.

Civic literacy is knowledge about:

- how government institutions work,
- what the current issues are,
- how to take political action to pursue a cause, and
- how to distinguish the reliable media from unreliable.

Below is the table demonstrating the four dimensions of Civic Literacy:

KNOWLEDGE	APPLICATION
<div data-bbox="191 884 269 953"></div> <p>Institutional Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic institutions and processes • How political power dynamics work in society • The historical evolution of Canada <p>Examples: the three branches of the state; the function of political parties; the methods by which public leaders are elected.</p>	<div data-bbox="841 884 919 953"></div> <p>Political Ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigate political participation • Know where to go in government if problems arise <p>Examples: voting; political actions like protesting; writing to elected leaders; engaging with appropriate government agencies; using media to advance a cause.</p>
<div data-bbox="185 1377 263 1446"></div> <p>Topical Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues and current events • Policy discussions • Awareness of parties’ positions <p>Examples: knowing who the premier or prime minister is; awareness of the public policy issues in play; following current affairs.</p>	<div data-bbox="841 1377 919 1446"></div> <p>Media Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and process information from the Internet and media • Seek out and evaluate original sources <p>Examples: recognizing fake news; processing new information and evaluating existing beliefs; identifying bias.</p>



A good understanding of these four dimensions will help us critically assess current issues and events, link it to the knowledge about how government institutions work, and develop and effectively plan for political engagement.

A new set of challenges requires even more attention to civic literacy:

- **Decline of newspapers – information gatekeepers** lead to the decrease of quality information;
- **Too much information** through social media causes poor decision-making by voters;
- **Information is distorted** through social media filters;
- **Selected information bubbles** – seeking information that confirms what you already believe in;
- **Disinformation** spread by those who aim to disrupt democracy and profit-driven sensationalist media.

Civic education is a lifetime process that cannot be achieved through a few lessons. What could be done through a few sessions is engaging people in important conversations and learning about basic concepts (e.g. government structures, voting process, etc.). This process, we hope, will spike curiosity that would lead to further informal learning. Working with newcomers will be particularly interesting because it involves co-learning – sharing experiential knowledge about various political systems and civic engagement practices from across the globe.

Citizen Values, Rights and Freedoms

It is impossible to avoid generalization when talking about a whole nation. For the most part, Canadians believe in democracy and encourage citizen participation. All citizens have equal access to power through participation and voting, as well as rights and responsibilities. The rights are protected by law and are based on the belief that everyone is entitled to human rights. Canadian values include equality, freedom, law and order, peace and respect for differences.

Canadian law has several sources, including laws passed by Parliament and the provincial legislatures, English common law, the civil code of France and the unwritten constitution that we have inherited from Great Britain.

The Great Charter of Freedoms (Magna Carta, 1215) includes:

- Freedom of conscience and religion;
- Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of speech and of the press;
- Freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- Freedom of association.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) includes the following:

- Mobility Rights — Canadians can live and work anywhere they choose in Canada, enter and leave the country freely, and apply for a passport.



- Aboriginal Peoples' Rights — The rights guaranteed in the Charter will not adversely affect any treaty or other rights or freedoms of Aboriginal peoples.
- Official Language Rights and Minority Language Educational Rights — French and English have equal status in Parliament and throughout the government.
- Multiculturalism — A fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity. Canadians celebrate the gift of one another's presence and work hard to respect pluralism and live in harmony.

Citizenship Responsibilities

- Obeying the law — One of Canada's founding principles is the rule of law. Individuals and governments are regulated by laws and not by arbitrary actions. No person or group is above the law.
- Taking responsibility for oneself and one's family — Getting a job, taking care of one's family and working hard in keeping with one's abilities are important Canadian values. Work contributes to personal dignity and self-respect, and to Canada's prosperity.
- Serving on a jury — When called to do so, you are legally required to serve. Serving on a jury is a privilege that makes the justice system work as it depends on impartial juries made up of citizens.
- Voting in elections — The right to vote comes with a responsibility to vote in federal, provincial or territorial and local elections.
- Helping others in the community — Millions of volunteers freely donate their time to help others without pay—helping people in need, assisting at your child's school, volunteering at a food bank or other charity, or encouraging newcomers to integrate. Volunteering is an excellent way to gain useful skills and develop friends and contacts.
- Protecting and enjoying our heritage and environment — Every citizen has a role to play in avoiding waste and pollution while protecting Canada's natural, cultural and architectural heritage for future generations.



CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS



The Charter protects the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS



The Charter protects rights that enable you to participate in the democratic process and have your voice heard in Parliament.

MOBILITY RIGHTS



All Canadians have the right to enter, stay in and leave Canada. The Charter also guarantees that you can look for work or set up a business anywhere in Canada.

LEGAL RIGHTS



The Charter provides a broad set of legal rights that protect us in our dealings with the justice system. It ensures that everyone is treated fairly during legal proceedings.

EQUALITY RIGHTS



Everyone has the right not to be discriminated against by the government based on personal characteristics like race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, disability or sexual orientation.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE RIGHTS



English and French both have equal status, rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.

MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATION RIGHTS



The Charter requires that provincial governments provide education to its citizens in the minority official language of the province where numbers warrant.

How to use your Freedoms, Rights & Responsibilities

You can use your freedoms, exercise your rights and perform your responsibilities through participation – taking part in your society, contributing ideas and time to help your community and country.

Vote
Volunteer
Become a Board or Committee Member
Participate in Community Consultations
Talk to your Member of Parliament & Member of Provincial
Government

Volunteering

Volunteering is an activity where an individual or a group provide services to benefit others for no financial or social gain. Volunteering is a great way to get out of your house and meet new people. There are a number of benefits of volunteering, especially, for newcomers.

There are a number of places where you can volunteer: faith organizations, community centre, local schools, and social services organizations. You can also choose to volunteer at big events. Some examples of volunteering activities:

- Support a community organization with administrative functions, such as answering calls, entering information in a database, organizing files
- Help with serving or delivering food
- Become a tutor
- Become a parent volunteer at your child's school (help supervise on field trips, coach a team, help organize events, etc.)
- Share your knowledge and skills through workshops (e.g. computer classes for seniors)

Benefits of Volunteering:

Improve confidence

Learn new skills and improve your chances to find a meaningful job

Build your social and professional network

Make friends

Learn about your community and culture

Share your culture

Improve your English skills

Be a part of your community and contribute to community development

Sign up for the local Volunteer Centre newsletter to find various volunteering opportunities: <http://www.volunteercentre.info/> You may also choose an organization that you would like to volunteer with and call or visit them to inquire in person.

Elections and Voting

When you become a Canadian citizen you receive a right and responsibility to vote, protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is a right because you can participate in choosing your government leaders. It is a responsibility because all citizens have a duty to vote, and every vote counts. This process keeps governments accountable to the people who have the voting power – the electorate.



Voting is your individual choice and it is done in private by a **secret ballot**. You do not have to tell anyone how you voted and nobody can tell you how to vote.

There are federal, provincial and municipal elections. In British Columbia provincial elections are held on the second Tuesday in May, every four years. The last one was in 2017, so there is one coming up in 2021.

Below is the description of the three levels of government – their structure and main responsibilities.

To vote in a federal election you would need to follow a few simple steps:

1. Get your **voter information card** that tells you that your name is on the voters list, and when and where to vote. If your information is updated in the National Register of Electors, you will receive the card by mail. If you did not receive it, please contact the Elections Canada office: 1-800-463-6868
2. If you know that you will not be able to vote on Election Day, you can vote at an **advance poll** or by **special ballot**. Dates and locations of the advance polls are on your voter information card.
3. On **Election Day** take your **identification** (driver's license, passport) and your **voter information card** and go to your local polling station indicated on your voter information card. At the polling station the poll officials will ask for your name and address, and will check your identification document. Then they will give you a ballot.
4. You will be asked to go behind a screen to mark your **ballot**. Mark an "X" in the circle next to the name of the candidate of your choice. Once you are done, fold your ballot and give it to the poll officials. They will tear off one part (counterfoil) and give you back the ballot for you to put in the **ballot box**.
5. Once every ballot is counted the **election results** are made public. You can check the election results online (<https://www.elections.ca/home.aspx>) or on television.

Government Structure

Adapted from "Civic Engagement for Immigrant Women" by Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

Overview

Canada became a country in 1867 when the Queen of England signed the British North America Act. This Act recognized Canada as an independent country and provided it with a Constitution – a set of rules that determine the powers and duties of the government and people.

Canada is a Constitutional Monarchy, which means our Head of State is a hereditary Monarch from the United Kingdom – the Queen. The head of the government is an elected Prime Minister. Government follows the principles of the parliamentary democracy, which includes: giving citizens the right to vote, having representatives from all regions, and voting by secret ballot. The government answers to the people and can be changed by the people. Citizens also have a right to participate in political activities that shape the nation.

Canada has ten provinces and three territories and a population of over 37.5 million people. There are three levels of government in Canada- Federal (national), Provincial/Territorial (government of your province or territory) and Municipal/Regional (local government).



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Each level of government has its own responsibilities. In general, the federal government is responsible for the issues that affect the whole country but shares some responsibilities with the provinces and territories, such as immigration. Provincial governments share some responsibilities with the local governments, such as transportation and housing. All three levels of government have their own taxes. The provincial and territorial governments look after regional matters, and municipalities and regional authorities (e.g. Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen – RDOS) take care of the local matters at the level of a city, village and rural areas outside of municipalities and villages. Below are some examples of government responsibilities according to the level:

Federal:

- Citizenship & immigration
- Defence & Foreign Policy
- Post Office
- Money
- Employment Insurance
- Canada Pension Plan
- Police/ RCMP
- Taxes

Provincial/Territorial

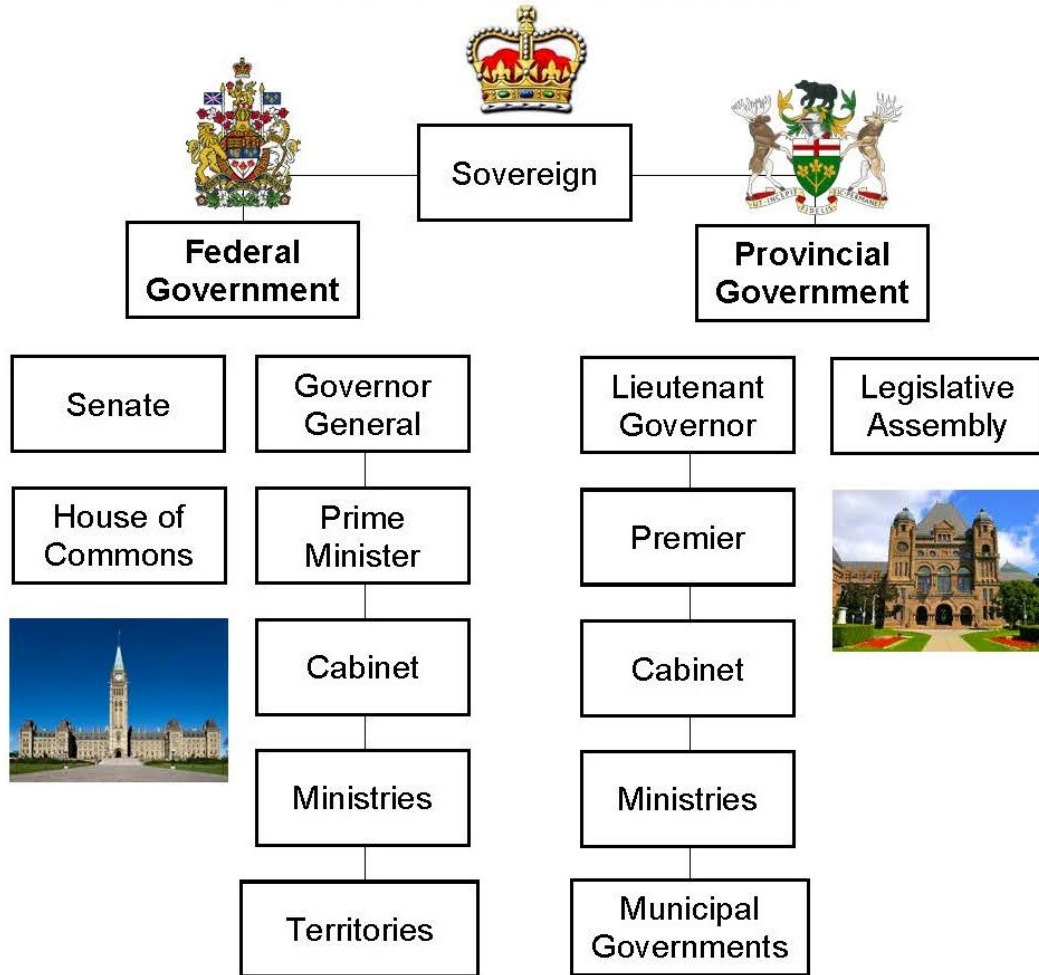
- Health & education
- Licenses
- Highways
- Prisons
- Transportation
- Parks
- Tourism
- Labour
- Taxes

Municipal

- Housing
- Garbage & recycling
- Water & Sewer
- Police and Fire Protection
- Streets
- Recreation
- Public Library
- Public Transit
- Taxes



Government in Canada



Structure Source <http://www.craigmarlatt.com/canada/government/government.html>

Federal Government

“Democracy asks a lot of citizens: it requires them to evaluate and choose among complex options, while still caring as much about the process of decision making as its outcomes” (The Samara Centre for Democracy)

As you can see from the structure above, federal government has two governing bodies – the Senate and the House of Commons. The head of the nation is the Sovereign (currently, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II), who is represented in Canada by the Governor General at the federal level and by Lieutenant Governors in the provinces and territories.



The Prime Minister is the leader of the political party that won the last elections and has the most elected Members of Parliament (MPs) sitting in the House of Commons. The House of Commons has 338 MPs. The Members of Parliament have a number of roles including legislature (developing and amending laws), representing people that elected them and help their continuance (people who elected them) address various issues that they are concerned about on the national level – e.g. national poverty reduction strategy.

The party with the second most MPs forms the Official Opposition. Canadian citizens elect Members of Parliament. The Prime Minister chooses several Members of Parliament to form the Cabinet. The Cabinet members are called Ministers, and they manage specific areas, such as finance, education, agriculture, etc. For example, the current (since November 2019) Minister of Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada is Marco Mendicino.

The Senate members – 105 Senators - are chosen by the Prime Minister. The main role of the Senate is to review the laws (legislation) developed by the House of Commons and provide second thought.

Provincial Government

Provincial governments are set up like the federal government but they do not have a Senate. The Lieutenant Governor represents the Crown (the Queen).

“Civic literacy: the individual-level tools, skills and knowledge that make democracy work”.
(The Samara Centre for Democracy)

The Legislative Assembly is comprised of 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) elected by the residents of the province. Each MLA usually belongs to a political party and the leader of the political party with the largest number of elected MLAs becomes the Premier. The leader of the party with the second most votes becomes the Leader of the Opposition.

The Premier, the head of the provincial government, chooses the Cabinet Ministers to oversee provincial government departments. The Ministers work with the municipalities on various shared responsibilities, such as transportation and housing.

MLAs are your provincial representatives – they listen to people's concerns and ideas, respond to questions, and share the views of their constituents (people who elected them) at the Assembly meetings. They represent all the people in the area where they were elected, not just those who voted for them. Residents can meet with their MLA in person or write a letter.

Municipal & Regional Government

Municipal governments are the local governments of cities, towns, villages and parishes. The Mayor is the head of a municipal government. The Mayor is the head of the City Council. Both



the Mayor and Councilors are elected by the residents during municipal elections. The City Council meets regularly to discuss local issues and develop local laws called bylaws.



Regional District Government

There are four municipalities in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region- Penticton, Summerland, Oliver, Osoyoos and Princeton, one village – Keremeos, and a few rural areas that are governed by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). The municipalities have the same structure as described above.

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is governed mostly by two provincial pieces of legislation – the Local Government Act and the Community Charter. It is governed by a board of directors with two types of members – Electoral Area Directors that are elected directly by rural area voters and serve four-year terms and Municipal Directors – members of the City Councils elected by the Council for a one-year term. The Electoral Area Directors represent Osoyoos Rural, Cawston, Oliver Rural, Skaha East/Okanagan Falls, Naramata, Okanagan Lake West/West Bench, Keremeos Rural/Hedley, Rural Princeton, and Skaha West/Kaleden/Apex.

Political Parties

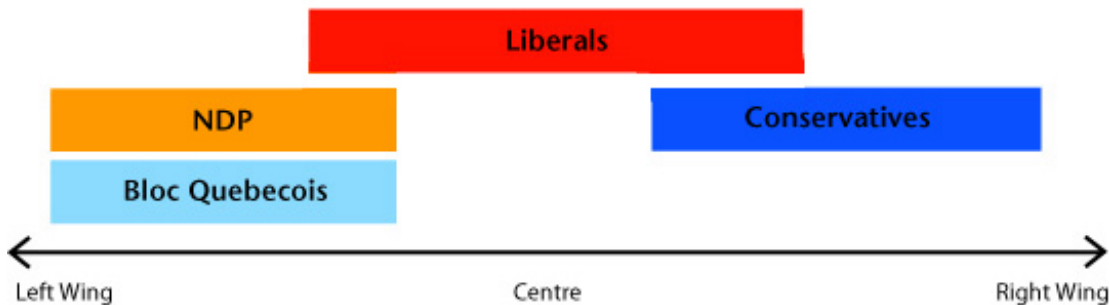
When you vote at federal or provincial level you usually vote for a person who belongs to a political party. However, there are some candidates who run as independents. There are political parties at the federal and provincial levels. Some have been around for a long time and some are newer. Any group of Canadians can create a political party at any time.



A political party is a group of people who share the same ideas about what the government should do and what laws should be in place. Each party has a leader. The leader of the party with the largest number of elected members becomes either the Prime Minister (federal elections) or Premier (provincial elections).

Political parties hold meetings to share their ideas and opinions, and make plans about what they would do if and when their candidates are elected to the government – party platform. They promote these ideas to the public to get people to join their party or vote for them in an election. Party members help choose the party leader and candidates, and campaign for party candidates in elections. Campaigning is a process through which party members and their candidate engage the public in conversations through television shows, meetings at community centres and schools and going door to door to speak to people. Candidates explain what their party is planning to achieve if they are elected.

The way political parties are categorized is with the use of a political spectrum – arranging them on a horizontal line from left to right. Generally, the parties who broadly favor social reform and activist government are closer to the left and those who favor social traditions and limited government i.e. conservative views are closer to the right. The parties in the middle are considered to be liberal.

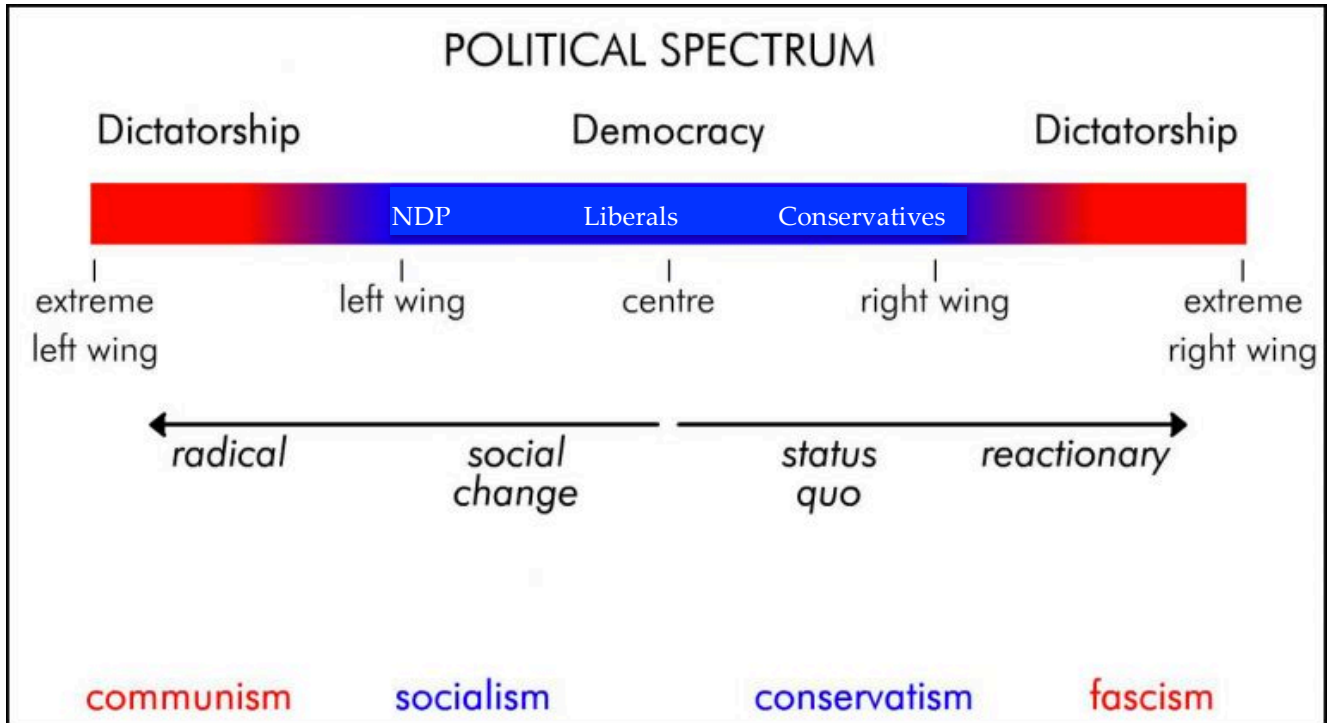


Source: BC Learning Network: <https://wcln.ca>

Canada has what is sometimes called the “two party-plus” system, which means that the country is usually dominated by two large parties – the left and right. And there is almost always a strong third-place party as well, either of the further-left or further-right. Historically, the political system has been dominated by the Liberal and Conservative parties. Since the 1980s the dominant third-place party has been the National Democratic Party (NDP).

There is also a consistently fourth-place party known as the Bloc Quebecois, which is devoted to Quebec separatism. People sometimes consider the Green Party of Canada to be Canada’s fifth “major party” but it has never won more than three seats in a federal election.

For a quick scope of the political spectrum please see the graph below.



Adapted from: *The Sutherland Experience* blog: <http://www.blog44.ca/michaels/2018/>

Ways to Engage

There are many ways to have your voice heard:

- Write a letter to local media or your elected official, such as Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA)
- Participate in surveys and consultations on the issues that are important to you – health, recreation, housing, etc.
- Make an appointment to meet with your elected official
- Organize or join a campaign
- Organize or join a demonstration

“Democracy asks a lot of citizens: it requires them to evaluate and choose among complex options, while still caring as much about the process of decision making as its outcomes” (The Samara Centre for Democracy)

Civic Education Activity Ideas

Here are some activity ideas for your group:

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- Use an experiential learning technique – identify a policy program in your community, research it, identify a solution and advocate for it to the appropriate public authority.
- Hold a Media Literacy training for residents. Check the Resources section below for media literacy resources.
- Have participant-led conversations about the issues important to your peer residents.
- Organize or join a Jane's Walk. Jane's Walks encourage people to share stories about their neighbourhoods, discover unseen aspects of their communities, and use walking as a way to connect with their neighbours. City of Penticton's Planning Department is a part of the network of Jane Walks organizers: <https://www.penticton.ca/>
- Work with your local government to engage in the Participatory Budgeting processes. Participatory budgeting is when a local government allocates a certain amount of money for residents to decide how to spend to better their community.

For a number of activity ideas with facilitation notes and handouts, please check out the Democracy Talks booklet:

https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/arts/documents/democracy_talks_2018_booklet.pdf

Resources



- Comprehensive guide to Canadian history, government, culture and more: <https://thecanadaguide.com/>
- Provincial Elections 101: <https://elections.bc.ca/resources/outreach-and-education/>
- Videos about voting in different languages developed by the Immigration Partnership Winnipeg as part of the “Got Citizenship, Go Vote!”: <https://www.ipwinnipeg.org/votecanada2019>
- Online tool to assess how your views align with those of the political party leaders: <https://votecompass.cbc.ca/canada/>
- Reporting and analysis of social and political issues in several languages: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/>
- Canadian magazine that provokes new thinking and focuses on the issues important to Canadians: <https://thewalrus.ca/>
- Articles on Canadian politics: <https://ipolitics.ca/category/news/>
- Website with a number of useful media literacy resources: <https://mediasmarts.ca/>
- Raising our Voice is a documentary produced by the Mennonite New Life Centre that tells the story of their Community Engagement program. It shares stories of newcomer advocacy for social change, fair employment and inclusive civic participation in Toronto. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfriSVVoyll>
- Democratic Engagement Exchange – a group that promotes civic education: <https://www.engagedemocracy.ca/>

About Local Immigration Partnership

A Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is a mechanism through which the federal government (IRCC) supports the development of community-based partnerships and planning around the needs of newcomers. LIPs seek to engage various stakeholders in a locally driven strategic planning process including employers, school boards, health centres, government, ethno-cultural and faith-based organizations, and the community and social services sectors. There are 19 LIPs in BC and 76 across the country.

LIP Objectives:

- Support better coordination in the planning and delivery of integration services across multiple sectors;
- Provide a framework to facilitate collaboration and develop & implement community-based strategic plans;
- Strengthen local integration capacity to foster labour market access, social inclusion, and sustainable welcoming communities;
- Achieve improved outcomes as indicated by increased economic, social political and civic participation by newcomers.

South Okanagan Local Immigration Partnership (SOSLIP)

Members: around 50 representatives of municipalities, chambers of commerce, community agencies, school boards, businesses, health service providers and newcomers

Strategic Directions:

- Increase the availability of, accessibility to, and relevance of, language training;
- Support newcomers to develop ad/or apply their knowledge, skills and abilities to match the region's work opportunities;
- Ensure employers have the knowledge, skills and ability to find, hire and retain newcomers.

Key Milestones:

- 5 year anniversary (established in 2014)
- Research: situation analysis and community needs assessment
- Established a Council (guiding principles, meetings) and workgroups
- Created a Strategic Plan
- Organized a number of projects (e.g. Welcoming Communities, Connect 2017, Connect 2018, Community Champions, Fast Track, Toastmaster's Speech Craft, Familiarization Tours)
- Organized several employer capacity development initiatives focusing on diversity and inclusion – workshops, presentations, resource sharing, HR workgroup
- Developed a Welcome Guide for newcomers in the region

For more information, please visit: <http://www.soics.ca/programs/local-immigration-partnership-lip/>

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