

Democracy In Action

Understanding & Exercising Your Electoral Rights



ELECTIONS BC
Province of British Columbia



...ing Day: _____ No. _____
District: _____
...umber: _____

COUNTERFOIL No. _____



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the 'Democracy in Action: Understanding & Exercising Your Electoral Rights' Grade 11 education kit is to educate and excite students about their democratic rights and responsibilities. It has been prepared in response to the declining youth participation rates in electoral democracy. In order to ensure strong democratic institutions in the future, participation by youth is critical.

This education kit will motivate students to take part in the electoral process by assisting them in recognizing that they, as citizens with rights and freedoms, have the power to effect change by having their voice heard through the electoral system.

Outcome

It is expected that students will learn about British Columbia's political system and recognize the importance of participating in the electoral process in British Columbia.

Participants

The 'Democracy in Action: Understanding & Exercising Your Electoral Rights' Grade 11 education kit was developed by Elections BC for students in Grade 11; however, the basic concept can be adapted by keeping only the lesson plans which best suit your class or group.



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LESSON 1: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

PART A:

Purpose

This lesson will engage students in discussions on the importance of knowing what the issues are, while isolating where possible, the influence of bias, attitude and values.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Demonstrate appropriate research skills, including the ability to:
 - 1) develop pertinent questions about a topic, an issue, or a situation
 - 2) collect original data, and
 - 3) evaluate and interpret data for accuracy, reliability, bias, & point of view
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information
- Assess the influence of mass media on public opinion
- Identify and assess political issues facing Canadians.

Background

Research indicates that youth (18-24 years of age) tend not to vote because they:

- Are not interested in politics
- Don't know enough about politics
- Don't know who to vote for
- Don't know where to find information about candidates and their positions on issues that interest them.



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LESSON 1: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION (CONTINUED)

Teacher Directed Discussion

This lesson begins with a discussion on the importance of making informed decisions.

It is important to provide the students with an example of a poorly informed decision. Ask the students if (1) they would like to leave class 15 minutes early today or (2) miss the next class with the teacher's approval. Once students have chosen option 1 or 2, explain the results of making a decision without the facts.

Students that chose option 1 will be able to leave class 15 minutes early.

Students that chose option 2 will be able to miss the next class. However, if they miss the class, a handout detailing their final assignment will not be given to them.

Explain that this is why it is important for voters to understand what each candidate represents before voting for them. (For definition of a 'Candidate', see Glossary, page 23.)

Student Activity 1

Students will be responsible for writing about issues that concern British Columbians and that can be affected through the provincial electoral/democratic process, for example, a) voting age, b) off-shore drilling, and c) minimum wage.

Lesson Preparation

Assemble relevant material pertaining to the given topics with the librarian's assistance. Information can also be derived from television news/talk programs, radio, magazines, publications, newspapers, and Internet.

Divide students into groups of three. Have each group select and examine one issue. Then, have each group prepare a discussion paper on their selected issue.



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LESSON 1: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION (CONTINUED)

Each entry should be a minimum of one page.

Each entry should contain:

- A description of the issue (conflict)
- The date and media source
- The name(s) of person(s) being interviewed and any special interest group or political party with which they are associated
- A description and discussion of the alternate points of view not presented. A consideration of why they are not presented.

As a follow-up, have the students share their findings in a general class discussion.

Student Activity 2

Using the same format, have students individually prepare a second discussion paper on an issue important to them.

Encourage students to discuss their topic with parents, friends or siblings prior to writing about it, as discussions often enhance understanding.

PART B:

Purpose

Now that students have been able to identify issues in Part A, in Part B students will engage in creatively conveying information about an issue that is important to them. Students will be required to make a convincing presentation that will be communicated in a visual, creative and entertaining way.



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LESSON 1: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION (CONTINUED)

Teacher Directed Discussion

During an election, candidates and party leaders must communicate their position on issues to the voters. This lesson begins with a discussion on the importance of providing people with enough information to enable them to make decisions. This includes not only written material but also a wide range of media resources in an attempt to communicate their message.

Lesson Preparation

Students will need access to the Internet and/or library to research their issues. Information can also be derived from television news/talk programs, radio, magazines, publications, newspapers, and Internet.

Student Activity

Students will be responsible for choosing an issue that is important to them. Let the students choose one of the following methods and then present their issue to the class:

- Play a piece of music for the class and then describe how and why the piece of music speaks to the issue
- Recreate a scene or pivotal moment in history (video or live)
- Make a video documentary about the issue
- Dress up like the people/parties involved with the issue
- Make a speech about the issue
- Make a poster or collage about the subject matter or issue and discuss its significance in relation to the subject matter or issue
- Write a poem about the issue and perform it
- Write a song about the issue and perform it
- Write a pamphlet or information flyer about the issue.

Teacher Direction Discussion

After the presentations, both presenters and audience should identify aspects of the presentations which are likely to influence the audience (i.e., images presented appeal to their sympathy). Would the same be true during an election campaign? Discuss with the students how a candidate may adjust their methods of communication and why (need for broad appeal, need for a consistent message, etc.).



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LESSON 2: DEBATING THE ISSUES

Purpose

This lesson will engage students in a debate of an issue and create awareness of the nature and role of interest groups.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression, as appropriate to the social sciences
- Gather relevant information from appropriate sources
- Assess the reliability, currency, and objectivity of evidence
- Develop and express appropriate responses to issues or problems.

Teacher Directed Discussion

This lesson begins with a discussion on how one group can influence another group. Discuss the usefulness of pressure groups in areas such as health care, environment, education, etc. as they contribute to a democracy.

Introduce the concept of a formal debate. Discuss how, in a democracy after listening to and reflecting on the arguments for and against an issue, all representatives cast their vote in order for a decision to be made.

Lesson Preparation

Photocopy 'Ballot Template', page 8, for students (see Step 6 on page 7).

Photocopy handout 'One Vote Makes a Difference', page 9, for students.



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LESSON 2: DEBATING THE ISSUES (CONTINUED)

Student Activity

Provide students with an opportunity to determine a topic that they would like to debate. Suggest a topic that relates to a subject that would interest them or refer to topics submitted in Lesson 1 Part A.

- STEP 1:** Divide the students into two groups – “For” and “Against”.
- STEP 2:** Sub-divide the two larger groups into groups of three.
- STEP 3:** Smaller groups discuss and formulate their arguments.
- STEP 4:** Reconvene the “For” and “Against” groups to share their arguments.
- STEP 5:** Select a leader for each group. Have each leader summarize, to the whole class, the arguments for their group’s position. Allow time for rebuttles and questions.
- STEP 6:** Distribute ballots to the students and have them, by secret ballot, vote for the leader representing the position they chose as a result of the debate. (See ‘Ballot Template’, page 8.)
- STEP 7:** Count the ballots and provide the students with the final results of the “For” party and the “Against” party.

Debrief

- Why did you vote the way you did?
- How do you think voters choose whom to vote for?
- Why is voting important? (Provide each student with handout ‘One Vote Makes a Difference’, page 9.)

This should be a whole class discussion. Review the electoral experience and ask students for their comments and reflections on this process and why their participation in the democratic process is very important.



BALLOT TEMPLATE

BALLOT

General Voting Day: _____

	<input type="radio"/>

PHOTOCOPY & CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



IN 1645:
One vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England



IN 1649:
One vote caused Charles I of England to be executed.



IN 1776:
One vote gave America the English language instead of German.



IN 1839:
One vote elected Marcus Morton as the Governor of Massachusetts.



IN 1876:
One vote saved President Andrew Jackson from being removed from office.



IN 1876:
One vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic.



California, Oregon, Washington, and Texas were admitted to statehood in the United States by a margin of one vote each.



IN 1923:
One vote gave Adolph Hitler leadership of the Nazi Party.



IN 1960:
John F. Kennedy won the presidential election by a margin of less than one vote per precinct.

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LESSON 3: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Purpose

This lesson will introduce students to the basic workings of the provincial electoral process. Using the library and/or Internet, students will identify the basic terms and concepts within the *Election Act*, and use that information to respond to questions.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Demonstrate the ability to think critically
- Identify the structure and operation of Canada's federal, provincial and municipal governments. Demonstrate awareness of how to access the various levels of government in Canada.

Teacher Directed Discussion

This lesson begins with a discussion on the three levels of government and some of the responsibilities of each.

Canada is a democratic country, where the people have the right to participate in the governing of the country. There are three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal (or local). These various levels of government serve and protect the rights of all residents.

FEDERAL: International trade agreements, communications with other countries on national issues, the defense of our country, our money system, immigration and national parks. The federal government convenes in Ottawa. The leader of the ruling party is the Prime Minister.

PROVINCIAL: Education, health care, highways, management of natural resources and provincial parks. The provincial legislature convenes in Victoria. The leader of the ruling party is the Premier.

MUNICIPAL: Repair of sidewalks and streets, recycling, garbage, streetlights, local building regulations, public transportation, snow removal, fire, police, and library. The municipal government convenes in each community, headed by a locally elected Mayor.

After reviewing the three levels of government, explain what democracy is, and how Canadians are protected by certain rights.



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LESSON 3: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (CONTINUED)

All Canadians are protected by certain rights based on Canada's tradition of democracy and respect for human dignity and freedom. These rights are found in Canada's Human Rights Code and in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All Canadians enjoy the following rights:

EQUALITY RIGHTS: equal treatment before and under the law, and equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS: such as the right to participate in political activities, to vote and to run for political office.

LEGAL RIGHTS: such as the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, the right to retain a lawyer and to be informed of that right, and the right to an interpreter in court proceedings.

MOBILITY RIGHTS: such as the right to enter and leave Canada, and to move to and take up residence in any province.

LANGUAGE RIGHTS: generally, the right to use either the English or the French language in communications with Canada's federal government and some of Canada's provincial governments.

MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATION RIGHTS: in general, French and English minorities in every province and territory have the right to be educated in their own language.

All Canadians also enjoy the fundamental freedoms of religion, thought, expression, peaceful assembly, and association.



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LESSON 3: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (CONTINUED)

Teacher Directed Discussion

To help students gain a basic knowledge of the provincial electoral process, provide students with an overview.

The Canadian Constitution states that all provinces hold general elections. An election is called by the issuing of an Order in Council directing the Chief Electoral Officer to prepare and issue the Writ of Election. A Writ is addressed and directed to the District Electoral Officer for each electoral district in which an election is to be held. (For definition of Chief Electoral Officer and District Electoral Officer, see Glossary, pages 23-24.)

In British Columbia, the provincial *Constitution Act* requires a provincial general election to be held every four years on a fixed day. The first pre-scheduled general voting day is Tuesday, May 17, 2005. Each provincial general election thereafter will be held on the 2nd Tuesday in May in the fourth year following the previous provincial general election. The province is divided into electoral districts. Candidates are nominated for each electoral district and the voters who live in the electoral district vote for the candidate who will represent them in the Legislative Assembly.

Profile on Elections BC

Elections BC is a non-partisan Office of the Legislature, responsible for the impartial administration of provincial elections, referendums, recalls and initiatives, as well as voter registration and voter education.

In addition to administering the *Election Act*, which affects provincial elections, Elections BC maintains and updates the provincial voters list, trains election and registration personnel, prepares and distributes election materials and supplies, and publishes information about the election. The Chief Electoral Officer reviews procedures and legislation and reports the election results to the Legislature.

Federal elections are administered by Elections Canada.
Municipal elections are administered at the local level.

Election Period

An election period is generally 51 days in duration. This period starts on the day the Writ is issued to the District Electoral Officer (Day 0 of the election calendar) and ends on the day the Writ is returned to the Chief Electoral Officer (Return of the Writ).



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LESSON 3: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (CONTINUED)

Timetable of the Election Period

Day 0	Writ day
Day 6	Nomination period begins
Day 7	Closing day for general voter registration
Day 15	Nomination period ends
Day 28	General voting day
Day 41	Final count begins
Day 50	Return of the Writ

During the election period, candidates are nominated, voters lists are produced, voting places are rented and up to 30,000 officials are hired and trained. Voters who aren't on the voters list can register in conjunction with voting. There are several opportunities to vote, ensuring that every voter who wishes to vote can do so. Elections BC administers voting at lighthouses, on naval ships, and in corrections facilities, as well as in schools, community centres and other locations throughout the province.

At the end of the election, votes are counted and tallied. The voters in each electoral district elect one Member of the Legislative Assembly to represent them. The political party represented by the most elected Members becomes the government, and the leader of that party becomes the Premier.

Student Activity

Students will need access to the Internet and/or library to locate answers to the student handout 'Democracy in British Columbia', page 14.

Debrief

- When students have completed the questions, review the answers using the 'Democracy in British Columbia Answer Key', page 15, to ensure student understanding.



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DEMOCRACY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA – STUDENT HANDOUT

1. What electoral district do you live in?

2. Who is your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)?

3. How many Members of the Legislative Assembly are there, and what political parties do they represent?

4. When is the next provincial general election?

5. What are the qualifications to register as a provincial voter in British Columbia?

6. Can an eligible voter vote only on election day?

7. Can you register as a provincial voter when you go to the voting place?



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ANSWER KEY DEMOCRACY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA – STUDENT HANDOUT

1. What electoral district do you live in?

Use the Web site at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm> to look up your electoral district.

2. Who is your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)?

Use the Web site at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm> to find out who is your Member of the Legislative Assembly.

3. How many Members of the Legislative Assembly are there, and what political parties do they represent?

There are 79 Members of the Legislative Assembly. To find out what political affiliation they represent, see the Web site at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-6.htm>

4. When is the next provincial general election?

The next provincial general election will be held on Tuesday, May 17, 2005. Each provincial general election thereafter will be held on the 2nd Tuesday in May in the fourth year following the most recently held provincial general election.

5. What are the qualifications to register as a provincial voter in British Columbia?

- be a Canadian citizen;
- be 18 years of age or older on General Voting Day for the election;
- be a resident of the electoral district;
- have been a resident of British Columbia for at least 6 months immediately before General Voting Day for the election; and
- be registered as a voter for the electoral district or register as such in conjunction with voting; and not be disqualified by the *Election Act* or any other enactment from voting in the election or be otherwise disqualified by law.



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ANSWER KEY (CONTINUED)

DEMOCRACY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA – STUDENT HANDOUT

6. Can an eligible voter vote only on election day?

No. A voter for an electoral district who meets the applicable requirements may vote in an election for the electoral district by one of the following:

GENERAL VOTING DAY - voting hours on General Voting Day are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Pacific time.

ADVANCE VOTING - Advance Voting is held from 12 noon to 9 p.m. on the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week preceding General Voting Day. Advance Voting is available to any voter and all Advance Voting locations are wheelchair accessible.

ABSENTEE VOTING - voters who are unable to attend their voting location on General Voting Day, or the Advance Voting location(s) in their electoral district of residence, may vote at any other voting location in the Province.

ALTERNATIVE ABSENTEE VOTING - an individual may vote by Alternative Absentee Voting if:

- they expect to be absent from British Columbia on General Voting Day;
- they have a physical disability, illness or injury or their mobility is impaired; or
- they will be in a location that is remote from a voting place, or will be unable to attend a voting place because of weather or other environmental conditions or for another reason beyond the individual's control.

Alternative Absentee Voting is available at the district electoral office until 4 p.m. (Pacific time) on General Voting Day. Voters who are entitled to vote by Alternative Absentee Voting, but cannot vote in the district electoral office, may apply to the District Electoral Officer for an Alternative Absentee Voting package. This package contains instructions, a ballot and the envelopes necessary to return the marked ballot by mail and protect the secrecy of the vote. Alternative Absentee Voting packages must be received by the District Electoral Officer by the close of voting on General Voting Day.

SPECIAL VOTING - the District Electoral Officer may establish special voting places to assist those eligible voters who wish to vote but are unable to attend a regular voting place on General Voting Day because they are in a hospital, mental health facility, long-term care facility or correctional centre.

7. Can you register as a provincial voter when you go to the voting place?

Yes. To register at the time of voting, a voter must provide two pieces of identification, showing, in combination, their name, current address and signature.

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LESSON 4: ELECTORAL HISTORY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Purpose

This lesson will provide students with an historical overview of electoral activities that led to the development of the province's democratic process.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Recognize connections between events and their causes, consequences, and implications.

Teacher Directed Discussion

This lesson begins with a discussion on British Columbia's first election held in 1871.

Lesson Preparation

Students will need access to the Internet and/or library to research their issues.

British Columbia's First Election, 1871

British Columbia's first election was an intimate affair. Only male British subjects, 21 years or older, and residents in the province for at least six months were eligible to vote. Judges, magistrates, and police were not allowed to vote. Clergy were not permitted to be candidates. Fewer than 3,000 citizens registered.

Candidates declared themselves in person on nomination day. Voting was by show of hands or by writing down one's choice in a polling book. Even in those days there was concern about political advertising and candidates' agents were advised that no cockades, ribbons, party ensigns, flags, etc., were to be displayed within eight days of the election. But there were no formal political parties then, or for another 30 years.



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LESSON 4: ELECTORAL HISTORY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (CONTINUED)

Only 46 candidates sought the 25 seats in the first parliament. Communications were so poor in the fledgling province that the election took two months to conduct and the legislature convened before final returns were received from the two seats in the Kootenays.

The big winner in 1871 was John Foster McCreight, a lawyer, who pulled 373 votes to top the poll in Victoria. Coincidentally, he became B.C.'s first premier when an administration was formed in mid-November.

John Ash took his seat as the first MLA from Comox with only 16 votes to his opponent's eight. Charles Semlin, a future premier, squeaked in as a representative for Yale, when the returning officer cast the deciding vote to break a 29-29 tie.

Student Activity

Provide each student with a copy of the 'Questions on Electoral History in British Columbia,' page 19. Students will need access to the Internet and/or library to locate answers to the questions.

Debrief

When students have completed the questions, review the answers using the 'Questions on Electoral History in British Columbia, Answer Key', page 20, to ensure student understanding.



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QUESTIONS ON ELECTORAL HISTORY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA – STUDENT HANDOUT

1. What were the three requirements to be eligible to vote in 1871?
Who was ineligible to vote?

2. What was the voting procedure in 1871?

3. What would be a potential problem with voting by a show of hands?

4. Identify three aspects of the 1871 electoral process that would be unconstitutional under the current election regulations.

5. Compared to elections today, the 1871 election would not be viewed as a fully democratic election. In your opinion, what part of the electoral process is fundamental in making an election democratic?



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ANSWER KEY

QUESTIONS ON ELECTORAL HISTORY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

1. What were the three requirements to be eligible to vote in 1871?

Who was ineligible to vote?

To be able to vote an individual had to be:

- male;
- a British subject; and
- a resident of B.C. for at least 6 months.

Judges, magistrates, and police were ineligible to vote. So were all women and non-British subjects (First Nations, Chinese, Japanese, East Indians, etc.).

2. What was the voting procedure in 1871?

Voting preference was indicated by a public show of hands or by writing down your choice in the polling book.

3. What would be a potential problem with voting by a show of hands?

Without the principle of a secret ballot, the electoral process is open to bribery, intimidation, and acts of revenge.

It was not uncommon for early elections to be tumultuous affairs with bribes of food, drink and money, violence and occasional loss of life.

4. Identify three aspects of the 1871 electoral process that would be unconstitutional under current election regulations.

Restricting the vote to male British subjects discriminates against women and other ethnic groups. As well, judges and police have the right to vote.

Voting by show of hands. Votes are now conducted under the principle of the secret ballot.

Two-month election period. An election period is now generally 51 days and the legislature cannot be convened until all votes are finalized.

Returning officer casting the deciding vote. Today if a vote is close or tied there is a recount conducted by a Supreme Court Judge.

5. Compared to elections today, the 1871 election would not be viewed as a fully democratic election. In your opinion, what part of the electoral process is fundamental in making an election democratic?

Answers may vary.



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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Research Registered Political Parties in British Columbia:

Students use the Internet to research registered political parties in British Columbia. (See Elections BC's Web site www.elections.bc.ca for a list of current registered political parties.) They should find out how many political parties are registered, what each party represents, and the name of the party leader.

The MLA could also be asked to visit the class:

Students could prepare a list of interview questions based on the issues that they have researched in Lesson #1.

An unsuccessful candidate could be asked to visit the class:

Students could prepare a list of interview questions based on the issues that they have researched in Lesson #1.

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly could be asked to visit the class:

Students could question the Speaker on the Assembly, rules and duties.

Start a school club:

Find people to join your club. Make rules and write a constitution for your club. Conduct meetings of your club.

Take a field trip to Victoria to tour the parliament buildings:

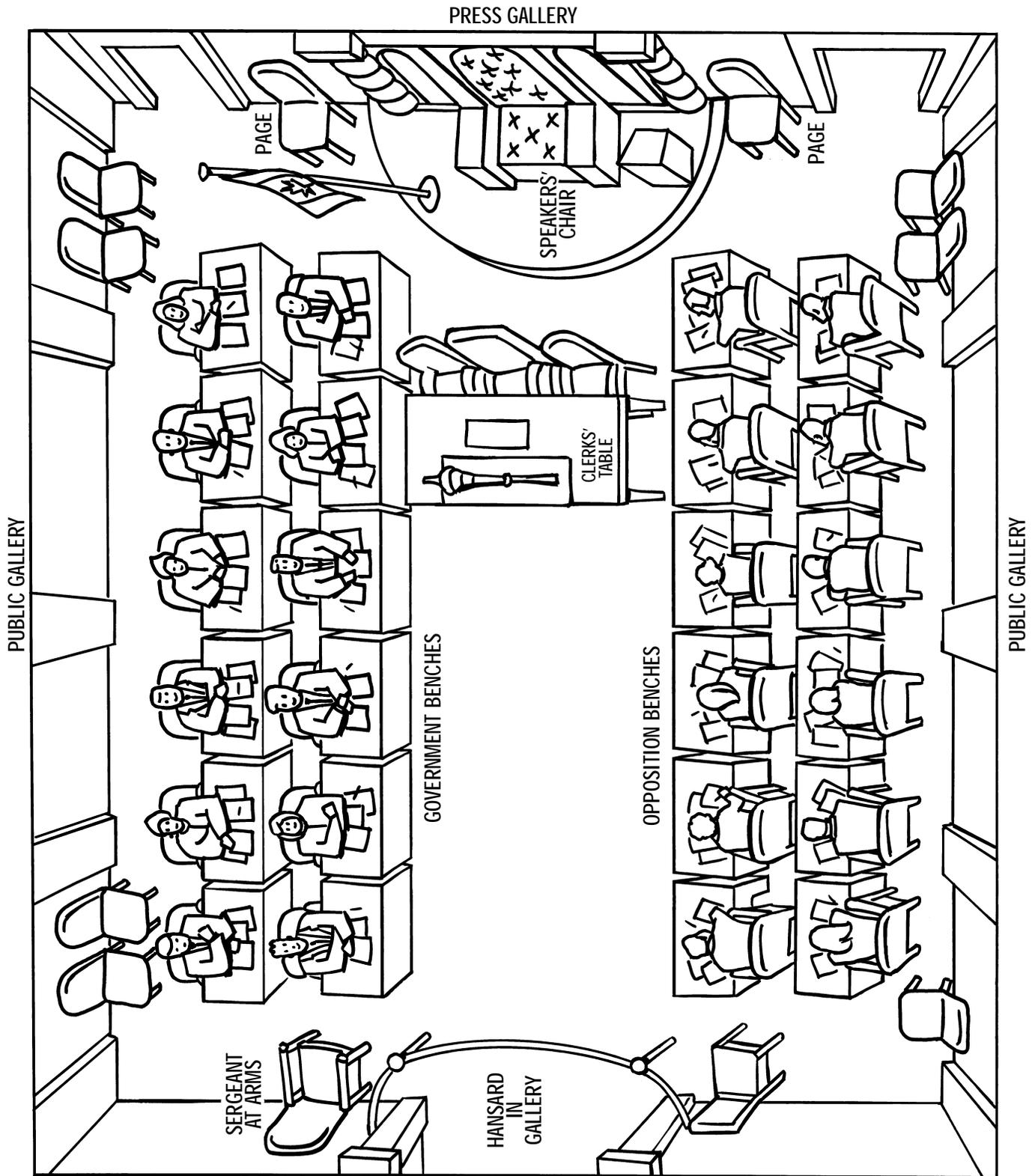
Sit in the public gallery of the Legislative Chamber when the House is sitting. (Provide each student with 'Legislative Chamber' diagram, page 22.)

School clubs:

Which clubs in your school are devoted to some cause requiring political decisions? Invite members to your class (i.e., environmental club).



LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER



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GLOSSARY

BALLOT

A ballot is a document used at an election to record the vote of a registered voter for a particular candidate.

CANDIDATE

An individual who has filed all required nomination documents and who has been issued a Certificate of Candidacy. For the purposes of election financing or election communications, a candidate also includes an individual who becomes a candidate or was a candidate in an election.

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

An Officer of the Legislature appointed by the Lieutenant Governor on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) is responsible for the fair and impartial administration of Provincial electoral events and referendums, recalls and initiatives under the authority of the *Election Act* and *Recall and Initiative Act*. The CEO is not entitled to vote in an election.

CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATION

The *Election Act* defines a constituency association as the local organization formed for an electoral district for a registered political party or the local organization formed to support an independent member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the electoral district.

Only one constituency association for an electoral district can be registered for each registered political party or independent MLA. However, registered constituency associations may have one or more branches (clubs) within an electoral district.

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DISTRICT ELECTORAL OFFICER

The District Electoral Officer (DEO) is appointed for each electoral district by the Chief Electoral Officer. The DEO is responsible for administering the election in that electoral district and ensuring that the provisions of the *Election Act* are observed.

FEDERAL ELECTIONS

Elections BC is responsible for conducting provincial elections in British Columbia only. Elections Canada is the agency responsible for conducting federal elections. Parliament appoints the Chief Electoral Officer to head that independent agency.

FINAL COUNT

Votes in certification envelopes are counted by the District Electoral Officer at Final Count. Final Count usually begins on Day 41. This allows enough time for certification envelopes containing the ballots of absentee voters to be sent to the District Electoral Officers for the electoral district in which the voters are registered. Final Count can take up to three days.

GENERAL VOTING DAY

The day on which an election is held. General Voting Day is the 28th day after an election is called (if a holiday, then the first day following that is not a holiday). Voting hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Pacific time).

INDEPENDENT

An individual who is not a representative of a political party, either as a member of the Legislative Assembly or as a candidate.



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INITIAL COUNT

At the close of voting on General Voting Day, the ballot boxes are opened and the Voting Officers count the ballots from General Voting and Advance Voting. This is called the "initial count". The ballot box and other supplies are then delivered to the District Electoral Officer. No certification envelopes are opened until Final Count.

INITIATIVE PETITION

A petition to have a proposed law introduced into the Legislative Assembly. The initiative process is governed by the *Recall and Initiative Act*.

LEGISLATURE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Is composed of the Lieutenant-Governor and the 79 elected Members of the Legislative Assembly.

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

The Queen is the legal head of state of Canada, represented in British Columbia by the Lieutenant-Governor. While election dates are fixed, the *Constitution Act* requires the Premier to formally ask the Lieutenant-Governor to dissolve the provincial parliament before the election may begin.

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (MLA)

Our electoral system is based on the principle of representation by population. British Columbia is divided into a number of electoral districts or constituencies, and the voters in each constituency elect one person to represent them in the Legislative Assembly.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Municipal elections are governed by the *Local Government Act*. Elections for the mayor and all councillors of each municipality and elections for the electoral area directors of each regional district, known collectively as a general local election, are held every three years.



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NOMINATION DEPOSIT

A deposit of \$100 must be paid by persons wishing to become candidates. The nomination deposit must accompany the nomination documents, when filed. The \$100 deposit is refundable in certain circumstances.

PLEBISCITE

A vote to determine the opinion of voters on any matter of public concern. Plebiscites may only be initiated by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The results of a plebiscite are not binding on the government.

POLITICAL PARTY

An organization that has, as a primary purpose, the fielding of candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly.

PROVINCIAL VOTERS LIST

A list maintained by the Chief Electoral Officer of those individuals registered as voters in British Columbia. Included are the name and residential address of each voter.

RECALL

Recall is a process that allows a registered voter in British Columbia to petition for the removal of their Member of the Legislative Assembly between elections. The recall process is governed by the *Recall and Initiative Act*.

RECOUNTS

In the event of a very close election or a tie vote, or if a voter or candidate believe errors were made in the review and counting of ballots, a recount of ballots may be requested following Final Count. If a judicial recount is requested, it must be requested no more than six days after the completion of Final Count. Judicial recounts are conducted by a Judge of the Supreme Court.



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REFERENDUM

A vote held under the *Referendum Act* to measure public opinion on a matter of public interest or concern. The *Referendum Act* provides for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations regarding the manner by which a referendum is conducted.

REJECTED BALLOT

A ballot that is rejected during the counting of ballots as it is unmarked, marked for more than one candidate or is identifiable.

RETURN DAY

Usually Day 50 of an election, the day on which the Writ of Election must be returned to the Chief Electoral Officer by the District Electoral Officer.

SCRUTINEER

An individual appointed by a candidate or the official agent of a candidate to observe the conduct of voting and the ballot counting proceedings for the election.

SPEAKER

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is an MLA who is assigned responsibility to oversee the debates and proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

SPOILED BALLOT

A ballot that is marked in such a way that it does not appropriately reflect the wishes of the voter. A voter who spoils a ballot may obtain a replacement ballot by giving the spoiled ballot to the election official. Spoiled ballots are never placed in a ballot box, and are not included in the counting of ballots at the close of voting.

VOTER

An individual who meets the qualifications to be a registered voter under the *Election Act*.



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VOTERS LIST

The voters list is prepared by the Chief Electoral Officer for use at an election. Voters Lists, also referred to as the Provincial List of Voters, contain the names and addresses of registered voters in each electoral district.

VOTING AREA

An electoral district is divided into voting areas for the purpose of assigning voters to voting places. A voting area is generally a geographic area containing not more than 400 registered voters.

VOTING BOOK

A book used at each voting station that contains the name, residential address and voter number of each registered voter in the voting area and a space for the voter's signature when they are given a ballot.

VOTING PLACE

A building or part of a building or other facility to which the voters of one or more voting areas are assigned for the purpose of voting.

VOTING SCREEN

A compartment within a voting place behind which a voter marks their ballot while screened from observation.

WRIT DAY

The day on which an election is called and the Writ of Election is issued.

WRIT OF ELECTION

The document issued by the Chief Electoral Officer and signed by the Lieutenant-Governor, directing a District Electoral Officer to conduct an election for the electoral district.



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WRITE-IN BALLOT

The write-in ballot is a ballot with a blank space instead of candidates' names. The write-in ballot is used by Absentee Voters to print or write the name of their candidate of choice, or the political party of choice, in the space. Ballots are not rejected for errors in spelling if the intent of the voter is clear.

WHERE TO VOTE INFORMATION CARD

All registered voters, including those who register in the first 8 days of an election, receive a Where to Vote Information Card in the mail prior to General Voting Day. Where to Vote Information Cards tell voters the location of their assigned voting place date and time for General Voting Day and Advance Voting.

