

## Lesson 3: Political Perspectives and Budget Priorities

### BIG IDEA:

The political spectrum is a means of characterizing beliefs, values and priorities, and provides a conceptual framework to view and evaluate political parties and public policies. Politics is rife with controversial issue and opposing arguments and it is important to question each other's viewpoints while also respecting the opinions of others.

### LEARNING GOALS:

Upon completion of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Compare and analyze different political opinions and economic priorities;
- Compare and analyze the positions and priorities of Québec political parties;
- Improve critical thinking skills and decision-making skills about public policies;
- Identify where they fit on the political spectrum; and
- Form its own opinion on public policies.

### SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS:

- Activity Sheet 3.1: Graphic Organizer
- Slide Deck F: The Political Spectrum
- *Party Perspectives* videos (video responses from Québec political party representatives - a video from the Liberal Party of Québec should be added shortly).
- Québec Student Budget Consultation survey (paper and online versions available)

### ACTIVITIES:

#### Hook: 5-10 min

Ask students if they would prefer to pay more taxes and have more government services and support, or if they would prefer to have lower taxes and less government services and support. Encourage students to share their reasoning or initiate a friendly debate. Additional questions:

- What services in which they currently receive would they be willing to forgo for lower taxes (e.g., doctor visits, maternity benefits, children benefits, subsidized public transit, Télé-Québec, public roads, snow removal)?
- Which services would they pay higher taxes for in order to receive (e.g., free university/college, dental visits, childcare)?

#### Background: 10-15 min

Guiding questions: What is the political spectrum? Where do you think you sit on the political spectrum? Do you believe your views align with those of your family and friends? (Resource: Slide Deck F: The Political Spectrum).

Key information:

- The political spectrum is a means of characterizing beliefs, values and priorities, and that it provides a conceptual framework in which to view and evaluate political parties.
- The spectrum can be viewed with two distinct scales: social and economic. The economic scale is often defined by the wide range of opinions on taxation, government debt, the role of government with regards to wealth inequality and creating jobs.

- **Left-leaning 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.
- **Right-leaning views** – Smaller government and less government services and intervention in the economy, inequality is not a concern, governments should not go into debt.

*Teacher Note: Students will complete a political spectrum exercise as part of the Québec Student Budget Consultation survey, but the class could complete other similar surveys available online.*

### **Working On It: 10-15 min**

1. As a class, watch the *Party Perspectives* videos on the Québec Student Budget Consultation website to introduce students to the different perspectives offered by Québec's political parties in relation to the upcoming budget, and in advance of the upcoming provincial election.
2. After watching the videos, students can complete Activity Sheet 3.1 in groups or pairs. Students can choose to use the graphic organizer to summarize the priorities of each party, or to record their opinions on the views shared.
3. Ask students to reflect on the following questions:
  - Which political party's opinion/position did you agree with the most? Why?
  - How is the political party representative reflect their position on the political spectrum?

### **Action: 25-30 min**

1. Provide an introduction to the Québec Student Budget Consultation survey. Students will be asked to answer questions related to their own priorities for the 2018 provincial budget. Their opinions, along with students across the province, will be shared with the the political parties, the media and the general population in advance of the 2018 budget.

*Teacher Note: A PDF copy of the survey questions are available on the Québec Student Budget Consultation website, and we would recommend reviewing them in advance with your class to make sure that all questions are understood.*

2. Provide students 20-25 minutes to fill out the survey. The online survey is compatible with smartphones and tablets. Paper copies of the survey are available and provided to you (with return postage) at no cost upon request.

### **CONSOLIDATION: 5-10 min**

Have a closing discussion about political perspectives regarding Québec's Budget. Alternatively, ask students to prepare a written reflection.

- Would you rather have lower taxes and fewer services, or more services and higher taxes? Defend your position.
- Which political party's economic policy do you agree with most and why?
- What have you learned about politics through the Québec Student Budget Consultation? What else do you want to know?
- What have you learned about yourself and your views? What or who do you think has shaped your views the most?

- Has anything you have learned as a result of the Québec Student Budget Consultation changed your party preferences for the upcoming provincial election?

#### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

A. Have students review their results from the political spectrum questions from the Québec Student Budget Consultation survey and compare them against the views of Quebecers that took part in past Vote Compass surveys. Discussion questions:

- Were you surprised about where you sit on the political spectrum? Do you think it is accurate?
- Did you feel more strongly about some value statements than others? Or do you feel like you were in the middle? Where you indifferent toward some issues?
- Do you know where your friends and family sit on the political spectrum, and do you think that it influenced your own view on any issues?
- Is there items that you strongly agree or disagree with? How could you influence the provincial government, or your own MNA, to take actions on those issues?

B. CIVIX-Québec strongly encourage students to contact the Minister of Finance with their own priorities. Conduct research on how you would contact the Minister at the Ministry of Finance, and the proper format and protocol for a letter or email to a government official. Alternatively, you could share your views through social media. Do you think that one method would be more effective than the other? Why do you think that is?

C. Divide the class into 4 groups and assign each a party represented in the National Assembly. Each group should conduct research into the party's economic policies and prepare a plan for the 2018 provincial budget. Students could focus on one specific issue of concern to all political parties (such as education or healthcare), or select a few issues to highlight.

Afterwards, have each group present their findings or have an in-class debate. Students could create visual materials (such as posters or slide decks) to highlight the specifics of their financial plan. A mock budget debate could be organized, like one held in the National Assembly following the presentation of the actual budget, with students taking on the role of the Finance Minister and political party leaders and representatives.

*Teacher Note: Preliminary research for this activity could be completed as homework in the days leading up to the activity, or completed over several class periods. Please be aware that not all Québec political parties communicate in both official languages. Some parties publish and share materials only in French, and you may be required to translate some materials or access media summaries.*

D. The 42nd Québec general election is tentatively scheduled for October 1, 2018 to elect members to the National Assembly of Québec. The 2018 provincial budget will provide the governing Liberal party to highlight issues they will hope to highlight during the campaign, and make spending commitments to persuade voters. The opposition parties will respond to the budget with arguments they will use in their own platforms, and argue why their ideas are better suited for the future of the province. Based on the issues you have learned about as part of the Québec Student Budget Consultation, and the opinions you have heard from journalists and political party representatives, have your preferences for the next government changed at all? If so, why?

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Québec National Assembly - <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/index.html>

- Student Budget Consultation survey - <http://budgetconsultation.quebec/survey> (*paper copies of the survey available upon request*)
- Quebec Student Budget Consultation website - <http://budgetconsultation.quebec>