

LESSON 3 - TO DO MORE:

This document is a complement to lesson 3. It provides activities as well as additional information to the lesson previously discussed. The five activities proposed aim firstly to help students to better understand where they stand in the Quebec political landscape and then to make them discover the means that are available to them to communicate their point of view.

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Positioning on a political spectrum

There are generally two ways for a government to stimulate the economy during an economic downturn. On one hand, the government can reduce the tax burden on companies and entrepreneurs to encourage more private investment in the economy. On the other hand, it can also increase government spending to create more jobs and encourage households to consume more.

Ask your students to discuss in a small group the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches. In class, review the advantages and disadvantages and then have students write their favorite approach on a piece of paper.

Watch the video [The political spectrum](#) and then ask your students to fill out the [Vote Compass: Student edition](#) questionnaire. Once they have completed the questionnaire, ask if the economic approach that they considered the most effective align with the distinction between left and right in the Vote-Compass and in the videos.

In small groups, have students imagine situations where one approach is more appropriate than the other. In class, discuss the different possible situations and ask students if politicians should make economic decisions based on circumstances or according to their position on the political chessboard.

1. Then ask students to think about the following questions:
 - a. How does the response of the representatives of each party seen in the party's perspective videos reflect their position on the political spectrum (left/right)?

A comparative study between Quebec/United States: Taxes and Health

Quebec and several US states are not only geographically close, but similar in other ways as well.

While the fiscal situation is in many ways similar, the approach to government spending, taxes and social measures are drastically different on each side of the border.

- In Quebec, a person earning \$50,000 will pay around 24 per cent of his revenue in income taxes. In the US, for instance in Virginia, a person making the same amount would be about 22 per cent in taxes. A Quebecer earning \$100,000 would pay 34 per cent of his revenue in income taxes, while a similar person in Virginia would pay only 29 per cent.
- The Quebec health system is almost entirely funded by government. In the United States, healthcare is only partially funded. Citizens are required to have private health insurance or risk high and potentially financially crippling health costs.
- Quebec spends much more on social programs. For example, new parents are eligible to take up to one year off after the birth of a child while still being eligible for employment insurance payments. In the United States, employers are only required to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave. Social benefits are not mandatory and depends on the employer.
- Post-secondary institutions in Quebec receive partial government funding to keep tuition costs low. Colleges and universities do not receive significant public funding in the United States, making tuition costs higher. The average cost for a year of post-secondary tuition in Quebec is around \$3,000, while it can cost an average of \$25,000 per year in the United States.

Suggested questions:

- Would you still go see a doctor if you had to pay for the visit?
- How would your personal budget change if you were responsible for your own healthcare costs?
- How would higher tuition costs impact your decision to go to university or college?
- Would you rather have lower taxes and fewer services, or more services and higher taxes?

A comparative study between Quebec and the other provinces: Labor and Debt

Using Slide Deck E, analyze Quebec's fiscal situation compared to other provinces: look at the employment rate, national debt, debt per person and debt-to-GDP ratio.

The debt-to-GDP ratio is a measure of a jurisdiction's debt in relation to its gross domestic product (GDP). By comparing what a government owes to what it produces, the debt-to-GDP ratio indicates their likelihood to pay back its debt. Generally, governments want to have low debt-to-GDP ratios.

Suggested questions:

- How does Quebec's financial situation compared to the other provinces?
- Are there other provinces with stronger economies and job prospects than Quebec? If so, which one?
- Economically speaking, what is the most attractive province to live in long-term?

Political parties

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 2019 provincial budget. You could invite your students to visit [Pollinise](#), an online platform created in the lead up to the 2018 Quebec provincial elections to analyze and compare political parties' platform. 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.

Once the research is done, organize a round table in which each of the groups presents the highlights of the political party that has been assigned to them on the chosen issue. To do this, students could use slides or even make a poster. Organize a debate on the budget, like the one organized in the National Assembly when the budget is adopted. Some students could even play the role of the Minister of Finance and the government while the others could be in the opposition parties.

From students to active and engaged citizens

CIVIX-Quebec encourages students to become active citizens. Invite your students to challenge government or political parties using a video or an opinion letter. With your class, try to reach a consensus on certain issues and seek to be heard by thinking about other ways to make your point of view heard.

Invite your students to reflect on what they learned during the Budget Consultations with Quebec students, by listening to the videos on the *experts' assessment* as well as those on *the parties' perspectives*. You can then get them to think further with the questions below.

Suggested questions:

- Have your opinions about the formation of the next government changed? If yes, why?
- Are there elements of the management or the creation of the budget with which you agree or disagree?
- How could you influence the members of the government to take action on these issues?

Invite your students to contact the Minister of Finance to share their priorities and to do some research on how to contact the Minister in the Department of Finance and the formal (protocol) way of sending him a letter or email. Note that they can also share their views on social media. However, they need to be wary of the risks associated with the use of those social medias. To this end, CIVIX created the educational program called "[News Literacy](#)".