

# Information Unit for High School Teachers

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for the  
Prime Minister of Canada's Web Site  
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## Preface: how this unit is organised

This learning unit presents a variety of activities and topics all related to the question of how the Government of Canada decides and acts, with particular reference to the role played by the Prime Minister. It touches not only on the machinery and processes of government, but on some of the other influences that shape national political life and government in Canada.

The activities are organised into four types:

- **Introductory Activities** introduce students to the core concept of the unit—the Prime Minister and government—drawing upon the students' own knowledge, using group interaction to set the stage for the explicit teaching of this core concept.
- **Activities that Develop New Concepts and Generalisations** teach specific topics.
- **Practice and Application Activities** give students opportunities to apply their understanding of new topics.
- **Activities that Extend New Learning** encourage students to see the implications of the topic in the world around them and encourage them to express their learning in a personal way.

For the most part, activities can be used individually for the teacher to explore an aspect of the national political process, or several activities can be linked to create a mini unit of study. The decision and structure rests with the individual teacher who knows the demands of the curriculum, the students' knowledge of the topics and what works best in the classroom.

Where appropriate, activities include suggested web resources and/or readings. In no way, however, should these suggestions limit the resources the teacher chooses to use in the classroom. In the case of the law-making simulation, a complete set of evaluation rubrics is also available to help assess the students' performance.

We hope you find that this unit makes a valuable contribution to your students' understanding of the many complexities of both the role of the Prime Minister and national government in Canada.

## List of important links

### **A Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure**

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/glossary/gloss-e.htm>

### **Cabinet Committee Membership**

[http://canada.gc.ca/howgoc/cab/cab-com\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/howgoc/cab/cab-com_e.html)

### **Canadians in the World**

<http://www.canschool.org/relation/history/menu-e.asp>

### **Departments and Agencies**

[http://canada.gc.ca/depts/major/depind\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/depts/major/depind_e.html)

### **G-8 Summit**

<http://www.g8.gc.ca/menu-e.asp>

### **Government of Canada**

[http://canada.gc.ca/main\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/main_e.html)

### **History of Departments 1867 to date**

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/related/Federal/DepHist.asp?Language=E>

### **How Canadians Govern Themselves - 4th Edition**

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/library/forsey/fedinst-e.htm>

### **How does a bill become law?**

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/info/ParliamentFAQ01-e.htm>

### **Leadership Conventions**

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/related/Parties/LeaderConv.asp>

### **Structure of the Ministry**

<http://pm.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=thecanadiangovernment&Sub=StructureoftheMinistry>

### **Team Canada**

<http://www.tcm-mec.gc.ca/welcome-e.asp>

### **The Cabinet**

<http://pm.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=thecanadiangovernment&Sub=RoleofCabinet>

**The Constitutional Act, 1867**

[http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867\\_e.html#executive](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867_e.html#executive)

**The Opposition in a Parliamentary System**

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp47-e.htm#INTRO>

**The Responsibilities of the Privy Council Office**

[http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?page=publications&Language=E&doc=respons/cover\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?page=publications&Language=E&doc=respons/cover_e.htm)

**Thirty-seventh General Election 2000: Official Voting Results: Synopsis**

<http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=rep/37g&lang=e&textonly=false>

**Thirty-sixth General Election 1997: Official Voting Results: Synopsis**

<http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=rep/dec3097&lang=e&textonly=false>

## The Prime Minister and the Political Process: a quiz for fun

The following quiz is meant to kick-start a more serious look at the Prime Minister and the political process, for which this unit presents a wide variety of learning resources.

Should the teacher choose, this quiz could be turned into a model for an activity in Section IV of the unit, *Activities that Extend New Learning*, where students could be asked to build a similar quiz based on the subject areas, concepts and terms they encounter in the course of their study. This quiz can then be used as an added resource for the overall unit.

### **The individual who has the record for serving the most years as Prime Minister of Canada is:**

1. Pierre Trudeau
2. Margaret Thatcher
3. W. L. Mackenzie King
4. Jean Chrétien

### **The Privy Council is:**

1. The federal department created to monitor and enforce Canada's *Privacy Act*.
2. A national artists' organisation with branches across Canada.
3. The body which provides advice to the Prime Minister, and to the Governor General and Queen.
4. Canada's top-secret intelligence agency.

### **A party platform is:**

1. A structure built specifically to accommodate election night celebrations.
2. The description of a party's political program.
3. The mobile stage often used in music videos.
4. Where the guests of honour are seated at political fundraising dinners.

**Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (the Official Opposition) is:**

1. The collective name for the Members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons not belonging to the government party.
2. A notorious punk rock song in 1978 that was banned in some parts of the world, including England.
3. The name of a now defunct political party that originated in Canada in the early 1930s.
4. Next to the government, the party with the most MPs in the House of Commons.

**Answers:****The individual who has the record for serving the most years as Prime Minister of Canada is:**

W. L. Mackenzie King

**The Privy Council is:**

The body which provides advice to the Prime Minister, and to the Governor General and Queen.

**A party platform is**

The description of a party's political program.

**Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (the Official Opposition) is:**

Next to the government, the party with the most MPs in the House of Commons.



## I. Introductory Activities

### Activity 1

#### What does it mean to be Prime Minister of Canada?

The class—either collectively, or in small groups—should brainstorm a response to the question: “When you think of the Prime Minister of Canada, what comes to mind?”

For example, one of the Prime Minister’s roles is to be leader of the Government of Canada. Another is to be a political party leader. One of his or her attributes or characteristics might be having a strong vision of what Canada should be and being an inspiring speaker.

### Activity 2

#### Prime Minister in the news: media watch

In groups, or individually, students should do a web search of three major media outlets in Canada for two weeks using the Prime Minister’s name as the search term.

For each story they come across during the search, students should note the following:

- Date
- Headline
- Summary (two sentence maximum)

The teacher should then review the results with the class, using the findings from the “Summary” of each news story to develop a list of the issues with which the Prime Minister has been associated during the period of the students’ research.

The results of this introductory activity would be helpful in Activity 1 of *the Activities that Extend New Learning*.

## **II. A. Activities that Develop New Concepts and Generalisations — the Political Process**

### **Activity 1**

Prime Minister as a Party Leader: so you want to be Prime Minister?

#### ***Political Parties in Canada***

Canada has 301 federal electoral constituencies that together ensure that all areas of the country are represented in the House of Commons. Canada's population is diverse in its culture, politics and history. To become Prime Minister and form a government, a person has to have enough political support and the confidence of the House of Commons.

But how can someone who wants to be Prime Minister ever muster and maintain the kind of support needed to maintain the confidence of the House of Commons on a regular basis?

Political parties are the key.

A political party is a group of like-minded individuals who work together to promote a set of shared political goals and values.

Students can be asked:

- Which political parties are currently represented in Parliament?
- Who are the leaders of these parties?
- Which of these parties has formed a national government at any point during Canada's history?
- How do political parties help a person to become Prime Minister and govern the country?

**Activity 2**The Official Opposition: quotation analysis***Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition***

"If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution His Majesty's [Her Majesty's] Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions. When it properly discharges them the preservation of our freedom is assured. The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends. It upholds and maintains the rights of minorities against majorities. It must be vigilant against oppression and unjust invasions by the Cabinet of the rights of the people. It should supervise all expenditures and prevent over-expenditure by exposing to the light of public opinion wasteful expenditures or worse. It finds fault; it suggests amendments; it asks questions and elicits information; it arouses, educates and molds public opinion by voice and vote. It must scrutinise every action by the government and in doing so prevents the short-cuts through democratic procedure that governments like to make."

—Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, *"The Role of the Opposition in Parliament," Address to the Empire Club of Canada, Toronto, 27 October 1949.*

Opposition is crucial to the Canadian political system and process. In the parliamentary system that Canada has inherited from the United Kingdom, the idea has even greater significance in the form of "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition".

- Have students define what they understand to be 'political opposition'.
- Does Canada share this idea of a "Loyal Opposition" with the political systems of any other countries around the world?
- What means are available to the Official Opposition to carry out its function?
- The Official Opposition is also sometimes referred to as a government-in-waiting. What does this mean?
- The Official Opposition has a very particular meaning and role in Canada's parliamentary system. What other groups or individuals scrutinise government activities on a regular basis?

For a further reading on the role of the opposition in Parliament, see Parliament's web site.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp47-e.htm#INTRO>

## II. B. Activities that Develop New Concepts and Generalisations — Governing Canada

### Activity 1

How does the Prime Minister select a Cabinet?

Direct students to *How Canadians Govern Themselves* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) [<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/library/forsey/fedinst-e.htm>] Have the students read the sections on the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

Students can then be asked:

- According to the sections, what factors go into selecting a Cabinet?
- How many of these factors are 'mandatory' and how many are a matter of custom or practice?

Students should then be placed in groups and asked the following:

- When forming a Cabinet, the Prime Minister has to take into account many factors, some of which you've reviewed in the reading on the Cabinet. It's even more complex than that, however. As a group, brainstorm other considerations that might go into a Prime Minister's decision as to who will be in Cabinet or not. Keep in mind the Prime Minister's position as the leader of both a government and a party and as the key political figure in the country. Justify these considerations.

Have students write their answers in the form of a checklist that they would recommend be kept in reserve by aspiring Prime Ministers. The checklist should include a short introduction explaining how this checklist would be of benefit to its owner.

**Activity 2****“One for all, and all for one”—Cabinet solidarity*****Cabinet solidarity***

When someone is sworn into the Privy Council for Canada, he or she is bound for life by an oath of secrecy. This oath is meant to ensure that Cabinet deliberations are kept between the four walls of the Cabinet meeting room and do not become public knowledge. Although Canada’s National Archives eventually release Cabinet papers, this comes many years after the lifetime of a particular government.

In addition to keeping discussions to themselves, Cabinet members adhere to the principle of Cabinet solidarity. What this means is that when a Cabinet Minister speaks in public, he or she is expressing the views of the government. If a Minister disagrees with the government’s position on a particular issue, that disagreement is kept out of public view. If the Minister cannot accept the government’s position and breaks with Cabinet solidarity by speaking publicly, this action demands that the Minister resign. Even after resigning, the former Minister must not reveal the details of Cabinet discussions or documents.

Students should be put in pairs. One student in each pair reads to the other the above reading on Cabinet solidarity. When complete, the pairs discuss the ideas behind Cabinet solidarity and secrecy to ensure they understand what the terms mean and how they are applied to the Government of Canada.

The class should then be placed into two groups.

Group 1 is to brainstorm a list of arguments in support of the statement “In a democratic society such as Canada, Cabinet solidarity and secrecy unreasonably and unnecessarily shield the political process from the eyes of citizens.”

Group 2 is to brainstorm a list of arguments in support of the statement: “In a democratic society such as Canada, Cabinet solidarity and secrecy are reasonable and essential if government is to be effective.”

Each group should note their arguments on the blackboard. The class as a whole should discuss them.

**Activity 3**Government and parliament vocabulary exercise

Parliament and government is full of specialised terminology that few Canadians use routinely. But this terminology is more than just words. It provides useful insights into how the business of national politics gets done.

*Playing Government and parliament Bingo (G&P Bingo)*

- The class should be divided into five or more groups (12 is the maximum that will work with a 5 x 5 bingo card).
- The teacher hands out the sample G&P Bingo card below.
- Each group is assigned a horizontal, diagonal or vertical row on the bingo card.
- The teacher explains to the class that the object of the G&P Bingo is for each group to find and record definitions for the terms in its assigned row. They are to be directed to the Canada web site as the starting point for their search ([http://canada.gc.ca/main\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/main_e.html))
- If there are enough computers in one room, all the groups can play the game at once, with the first group to find definitions for all its words shouting 'bingo'.
- If a simultaneous session is not possible, each group's efforts could be timed separately, with the winner being the group that took the least amount of time.

The teacher can create multiple bingo G&P Bingo cards using the glossary on Parliament's web site as a source of words.  
(<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/glossary/gloss-e.htm>).

In addition, throughout their overall unit study, students could be asked to submit other new and interesting words they come across, and in this way, contribute to the lingo bingo of other groups of students that may follow them.

15  
G&P Bingo Card

<b>Minority government</b>	<b>Governor General in Council</b>	<b>Non-confidence motion</b>	<b>Privy Council</b>	<b>Official opposition</b>
<b>Question period</b>	<b>Order in Council</b>	<b>Parliament</b>	<b>Speech from the Throne</b>	<b>Private bill</b>
<b>Prime Minister</b>	<b>Royal assent</b>	<b>Clerk of the Privy Council</b>	<b>Act of Parliament</b>	<b>Crown</b>
<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>Main estimates</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>Majority government</b>
<b>Caucus</b>	<b>Back benches; Backbencher</b>	<b>Bill</b>	<b>House of Commons</b>	<b>Front benches</b>

### III. A. Practice and Application Activities — the Political Process

#### Activity 1

##### Election analysis

This activity challenges the students to analyse the biggest single event in the federal political process: a national election.

The teacher chooses to study either the 1997 or 2000 federal election. The class is divided into five home groups, and each group is assigned one of the five parties that won seats in the election.

Each home group is to analyse the party they have been assigned by addressing the following:

- What are the facts of the election? i.e., who was the party leader, how many seats did the party win, and in what areas of the country did the party receive its most support?
- What were the key elements of the party's platform, or the program it presented to the voters?
- In analysing the campaign, what worked or did not work well for the party? Were there particular 'defining' moments that, in hindsight, benefited the party or worked against it?

When the home groups finish their work, new groups are to be formed so that within each new group, there is at least one expert on each of the five political parties.

Within the new groups, each 'expert' is to debrief the others on the findings for their particular party. When all experts have had their turn, and all five parties have been reviewed, the group should answer the following:

- Among the five parties that won seats in the election, what similarities and differences did you see?
- Did you detect any differences in the roles played by the leaders?
- If you were the leader of any of the five parties at the time, would you have run a different campaign?

⇒ Resources

For an overview of the election campaigns, students should be encouraged to search major Canadian media web sites.



For a review of the official voting results, students can consult the Elections Canada web site.

Election 2000 results

<http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=rep/37g&lang=e&textonly=false>

Election 1997 results

<http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=rep/dec3097&lang=e&textonly=false>

### III. B. Practice and Application Activities — Governing

#### Activity 1

Choose a department!

When a Cabinet is selected, not only is the Prime Minister making public the membership of his or her circle of close advisors, he or she is also selecting who is going to run the various federal departments across the government. Almost without exception, a Cabinet Minister is responsible for a department. These departments (as well as other agencies and federal bodies), and the public servants who work for them, are key in implementing the government's program and policies for the country, and in governing as a whole.

Using the listing of government departments on the Canada web site (<http://canada.gc.ca/depts/major/depindex.html>), students are to choose a department that most interests them.

Students are to research the department of their choice and answer the following questions regarding that department.

- Who is the Minister of the department?
- What is the mandate or mission of the department?
- What are the key programs the department has in place to fulfil its mandate/mission?
- What is the department's budget?

Students are to present their research in an imaginative format that captures the essence of the department they studied. For example, for the Department of Canadian Heritage, the presentation might have an arts and culture flair (a skit or drama are possibilities).

#### Activity 2

The Cabinet machinery

So how does the Cabinet decide? With Ministers in the Cabinet having the expertise and responsibilities of their departments behind them, with a non-stop flow of issues swirling about the country, and a Prime Minister with his or her vision of what the government should do and be, how does this body carry out its work?

##### *Step 1*

Students should then be asked to brainstorm:

*If you were the Prime Minister...*

- How often would the Cabinet meet?
- Should all the Cabinet members play an equal role in all Cabinet issues?
- What process would you put in place to manage the Cabinet's workload?
- What outside support would you provide the Cabinet so that it could manage its workload?

Once the brainstorm is complete, the class collectively reviews its findings and a consensus is sought on how the students' Cabinet would operate.

### *Step 2*

Students should be randomly selected by counting off "1s" and "2s" and then assigned the following research projects on the machinery of Cabinet, with Project 1 for the 1s and Project 2 for the 2s.

#### ⇒ *Project 1*

Individually, students are to research the process by which the current Cabinet conducts its decision-making, paying specific attention to the Cabinet committee structure. In addition, what does the mandate, or areas of concern for each committee, reveal about the government's thinking and approach to issues of the day? Last, the teacher may wish to extend this project by asking that the students research one other Canadian Ministry since the 1960s to determine if a similar Cabinet committee approach was in place then.

The current Cabinet's decision making process is described on the Prime Minister's web site:

Role of the Cabinet

<http://pm.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=thecanadiangovernment&Sub=RoleofCabinet>

and

Structure of the Ministry

<http://pm.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=thecanadiangovernment&Sub=StructureoftheMinistry>

#### ⇒ *Project 2*

Just as an individual Minister has the support of a department's bureaucracy in carrying out his or her responsibilities, so too does the Prime Minister and the Cabinet as a whole. The Privy Council Office (PCO) plays this role.

Individually, students are to research the role of the Privy Council Office in supporting the Prime Minister and Cabinet. What does the PCO do to support the Prime Minister and Cabinet? Who leads the PCO and how has this position's responsibilities changed over the years? In what ways is the PCO like any other government department? In what ways is it different?

The responsibilities of the Privy Council Office are described on its web site. ([http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?page=publications&Language=E&doc=respons/cover\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?page=publications&Language=E&doc=respons/cover_e.htm))

### *Step 3*

Pairs of students should be assembled, comprising a "1" and a "2" student in each pair. Each student should provide a short debrief of his or her findings. Together, the students should review the questions and results of the brainstorm that the class worked on at the beginning of this activity.

In light of what they have learned in the course of their just completed research, each pair should return to the original brainstorm exercise and answer the questions again, i.e.:

*If you were the Prime Minister...*

- How often would the Cabinet meet?
- Should all the Cabinet members play an equal role in all Cabinet issues?
- What process would you put in place to manage the Cabinet's workload?
- What outside support would you provide the Cabinet so that it could manage its workload?

The teacher should then do a quick review with the class as a whole, asking:

- How close was the class's initial assessment of the way Cabinet works to the way it does, in fact, work?
- When asked the second time to imagine you were Prime Minister and to organise the work of the Cabinet, did your views change from those you held during the initial brainstorm? How so? Why?

**Activity 3****Team Canada Trade Missions—where the domestic and the foreign meet*****The Team Canada Trade Missions***

When our government was elected in 1993, the impact of globalisation was becoming ever more evident. Formulating a strategy to assure Canada's continued prosperity within this emerging reality was among our priorities.

Team Canada is a centrepiece of our strategy. It was born of the conviction that promoting economic growth in Canada depended on a partnership between governments and the private sector. Since the first Team Canada in 1994, we have shown that Canada is a nation where everyone works together for our common success and that we are squarely committed to meeting the challenges of globalisation.

The Team Canada formula has been a resounding success. The five missions it has been my privilege to lead\* have so far helped more than 1800 Canadian businesses conclude more than 880 deals in 13 countries, worth an estimated \$24.4 billion. Deals that have translated into thousands of jobs in Canada, as well as close ties with people from the four corners of the globe. And more success lies ahead for Team Canada.

—*Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, 1999*

\* as of July 2001, the Prime Minister had led six Team Canada missions

The teacher should share the above quote with students and ask that they read it twice. After everyone has read the quote, the teacher should ask the class:

- What is Team Canada (and we're not talking hockey!)?
- What forces/developments are afoot in the international community that convinced the Prime Minister and the government to launch Team Canada?
- Can you explain or define these factors/developments?
- Why do you think the government chose a Team Canada approach as part of its strategy to boost Canadian business?
- Why do you think that the Prime Minister thinks it important enough to lead all of the Team Canada missions?

In groups, or individually, students are then to be assigned the following scenario and task:

*A representative from a foreign government has approached you in your capacity as International Trade Advisor to the Prime Minister. He has heard about your Team Canada program and wants to know more about how it works and specifically, about one of the missions that has already taken place.*

*After some discussion, the two of you agreed that you would brief him on this issue and that your briefing would include a general summary on the Team Canada approach, and a review of how the government decides who will participate from the private sector and what government departments will be involved. In addition, you will provide some information on one of the Team Canada missions. This information would include where the mission took place, the estimated trade benefits of the mission and the general reaction from Canadians, media and business.*

In carrying out this assignment, students can choose to do their briefing in any presentation format that suits them, provided it addresses the information requirements outlined above. For resources, they should consult major Canadian media web sites for analysis and background, as well as the Team Canada web site. (<http://www.tcm-mec.gc.ca/welcome-e.asp>)

Some students could be randomly chosen to deliver their briefings to the class or they can simply be handed in to the teacher.

#### **Activity 4**

##### Prime Minister and foreign policy: the international stage

The teacher hands out the following instructions to the students:

*Each year, the major industrial nations meet as the G-8. As head of government, the Prime Minister represents Canada at the G-8. This summit is a key event for Canada and the Prime Minister on the international stage.*

*Choose one of the summits that has been held since 1997 (Hint: These meetings are held in the summer and rotate among G-8 members. As well, until recently, there were seven members in this group, so it was known as the G-7). Using the web site created by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (<http://www.g8.gc.ca/menu-e.asp>) and key Canadian media web sites, build a hard copy or web scrapbook of headlines and photos on the Prime Minister and Canada at the G-8. The scrapbook should also include a summit summary that includes (in bullet form) the key issues discussed at the summit, the decisions taken at the summit, as well as Canada's position, views, or official reactions to these issues.*

## IV. Activities that Extend New Learning

### Activity 1

#### You are a journalist

The teacher hands out the following instructions to the students:

*Canada's major newspapers have columnists who regularly cover the Prime Minister. You, too, can be such a journalist.*

*Choose a major national issue and follow it closely in the news media for two weeks. You could also look back at least a month from the time you start your close watch to see what has happened in the near past. Pay particular attention to the role of the Prime Minister in leading and/or reacting to the issue.*

*Your task is to write a 500-word newspaper column on the Prime Minister and the issue you have chosen. Remember, a columnist writes newspaper columns that reflect not only the facts of the issue, but the columnist's personal views on the situation.*

### Activity 2

#### Lead a department!

This activity is designed as a follow-on to the *Choose a department* activity in Section III B. Students should work with the same department as they did in the earlier activity.

The teacher hands out the following scenario to the students:

*Congratulations, you've just been sworn in to the Cabinet of the newly elected Government of Canada. The Prime Minister has appointed you Minister of [insert name of department previously studied]. One of the reasons you got the job is your vast experience as an academic expert on this department and the Prime Minister wants you to put this knowledge to work.*

*The Prime Minister is considering an overhaul of the federal bureaucracy. She wants a report from you on whether you think your department is an effective vehicle for implementing government policy. Should the new government change the department's programs, or maybe the department itself, by breaking it up or merging it with other departments? Perhaps no changes are required?*

*The Prime Minister realises that you haven't been long on the job but she is action-oriented and wants all her Ministers to provide their initial impressions of*

*their new departments by the time of the next Cabinet meeting. As a result, you have been asked to provide her a briefing note on your findings and views.*

Students can use their previous research as a starting point. As Cabinet ministers, they should apply their own views and opinions to the facts and not be afraid to speak frankly to the Prime Minister as their briefing notes are for the Prime Minister and Cabinet only.

As a further source of guidance to the students, the teacher could provide web addresses to party platforms produced during the most recent federal election. The Cabinet in the exercise above could then be a Cabinet from one of these parties under the working assumption that they formed the government. The election platform would then be a source of direction for each Cabinet Minister.

The briefing note should be 800 words.

### **Activity 3**

#### **Making laws in Canada: a simulation**

##### *Introduction*

This simulation exercise is meant to give students a sense of the complexities and steps involved in turning a public policy priority into law. Even though it simplifies an often lengthy and multi-faceted real life process, the simulation will nonetheless be a challenge both to the students and teacher alike.

The exercise is best undertaken by a senior class that has already studied government and parliamentary processes at some length. Some suggested resources are provided, but the teacher will want to augment them as he or she sees fit. Because the simulation takes place in several discrete 'chunks' involving different students in the class at different points in time, the overall debriefing exercise at the end is particularly important.

The teacher should stress that this activity is a simulation only and that not all of the details around the making of public policy and law can be captured. At the same time, students should be encouraged to do their best, based on their research and inclinations, to make the simulation as 'real' as possible.

##### *Set up*

The teacher should scan Canadian media sources to determine a current public issue that lends itself well to the simulation exercise. It should also be an issue that has generated differences in policy positions among the political parties in Parliament, and among stakeholders or opinion leaders.

The teacher should divide the class into three groups; one representing the lead government department responsible for the policy issue, one representing the cabinet, and one representing the House of Commons (for the purpose of this



exercise, the parliamentary process will be captured by the House of Commons only and will not involve the Senate or Governor General as such).

Each group will conduct its work on its own, following the sequence of events that begins with the department developing proposed or draft legislation, the Cabinet then reviewing and blessing it, and last, the House of Commons debating and passing the bill (which becomes law).

### *Government Department*

The teacher should choose a current issue where the lead federal department can easily be identified. For example, a new policy on Aboriginal Peoples would be led by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. A new policy on subsidies for Canadian publishers would be led by the Department of Canadian Heritage, while a new policy on air quality would be led by Environment Canada.

With reference to how the issue is being portrayed in the media (i.e., what is going on? Why is this in the news? What has the government said? Why does the government need to react? What is the opposition saying in Parliament? What do the stakeholders outside government have to say?), the teacher should instruct the students in the Government Department group that they are to draft a proposed policy along general lines. The direction to students should give them only the broad parameters of the new policy, as it will be their job to produce something more specific.

Before sitting down to draft a policy, students should be advised to first:

- Research the background to the issue.
- Research the general nature of the department that they represent.
- Research the government's position on this issue.

The result of the students' work should be a minimum two-page 'Cabinet document' that is organised as follows:

- Issue (i.e., what is the public policy issue at hand?).
- Background / Context (i.e., any necessary background that will help the Cabinet understand the policy that is being proposed, including the nature and scope of the problem, and the views of stakeholders).
- Recommendation (i.e., the legislation the government should enact to deal with the policy issue).

### *The Cabinet*

For the purposes of the exercise, the Cabinet will consist of:

- the Prime Minister

- the Minister sponsoring the legislation produced in the previous exercise
- the Minister of Finance
- three other Ministers of the teacher's choosing (these should be chosen with a view to bringing their divergent and perhaps conflicting views to bear on the proposed legislation)

The teacher should create short, two-paragraph scenarios that will guide each role the students will play in the Cabinet. For example, perhaps the Prime Minister campaigned on the issue and is a strong supporter of the proposed legislation. On the other hand, most of the Cabinet Ministers around the table are highly sceptical of the approach being proposed. These scenarios should be given some 'real-life' context if possible.

All of the students should prepare their own speaking notes in advance of the Cabinet meeting that will guide their positions in Cabinet. Of course, the Minister sponsoring the legislation will have the Cabinet document to work from. The students should be advised that their notes should not limit their discussion, merely serve as its foundation.

The Cabinet Minister proposing the legislation should present it to Cabinet, after which it is to be discussed and decided upon. It is the Cabinet's job to review the proposed legislation and make any necessary changes before it is presented to Parliament.

For the purposes of the simulation, the Cabinet should be advised that the legislation should go forward, with amendments if necessary. In real life, however, not everything goes through Cabinet first time around!

Because this exercise simulates a meeting, the teacher will be required to observe it first hand in order to evaluate the students' work. For this purpose, the evaluation rubric below is available.

#### *The Parliament (House of Commons)*

The teacher should divide the group into the government party and the opposition. If numbers are sufficient, the opposition can be divided further to reflect the current party representation in Parliament.

- The students should be presented with the proposed legislation that was approved by Cabinet.
- Each opposition party, in preparation for the debate in the House of Commons, should research the issue of concern, the legislation being put forward by the government, and determine the position of their party.

- For the governing party, these students should brainstorm the likely approach the opposition will adopt in reaction to the legislation in order to be prepared to respond effectively.
- In the classroom, the desks should be arranged so that the opposition members face the government members, as is the case in the House of Commons. Those students not participating as Members of Parliament should view the proceedings from the wings, with one of them acting as Speaker to moderate the debate.
- The teacher should set a time limit for the debate, which should begin with an opening statement by the Minister sponsoring the legislation. The Speaker can then oversee questions from the opposition, in the style of Question Period.
- Once the allotted time has passed, a vote should be taken.

All of the students should prepare their own speaking notes in advance of the debate in Parliament. These notes will guide their arguments in the House of Commons. The students should be advised that their notes should not limit their discussion, merely serve as its foundation.

For the benefit of the teacher, an evaluation rubric is available below for this section of the simulation.

#### *Debriefing exercise*

Since only the final section of the simulation was witnessed/experienced by all, the students in the Government Department and Cabinet groups should share with the class their views on their particular group's experience. For example:

- What did they enjoy about the simulation? What did they not?
- What did they learn about making public policy that surprised them?
- What was the most difficult part of the task they had?

The group as a whole should discuss:

- Was this an effective way to learn about making public policy?
- What are the necessary elements to successful public policy?
- If you were given a chance to do another simulation like this, are there things you would do to improve it?
- Did the simulation change your views about how public policy is made in Canada and the people involved?

*Suggested Resources for this exercise*

Parliament's fact sheet on how a bill becomes law

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/info/ParliamentFAQ01-e.htm>

Role of the Cabinet

<http://pm.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=thecanadiangovernment&Sub=RoleofCabinet>

*How Canadians Govern Themselves* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/library/forsey/fedinst-e.htm>

Role of the opposition in Parliament

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp47-e.htm#INTRO>

Structure of the Canadian Ministry

<http://pm.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=thecanadiangovernment&Sub=StructureoftheMinistry>

Canada Site

[http://canada.gc.ca/howgoc/cab/cab-com\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/howgoc/cab/cab-com_e.html)

***Making Law in Canada—Evaluation Rubric***  
**Department (Cabinet Document)**

<b>Content of Cabinet Document</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<b>Satisfactory (2)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Very Good (4)</b>
<i>Issue text</i>	Policy issue vaguely or unclearly expressed.  Many grammar and spelling errors.	Policy issue clearly stated.  Some grammar and spelling errors.	Clearly sets out the policy issue; explains how the issue is related to the general goals of the government.  Very few grammar and spelling errors.	Clearly sets out the policy issue; explains how the issue is related to the general goals of the government, as well as its political importance.  No apparent grammar and spelling errors.
<i>Background text</i>	Background vaguely expressed or unclearly expressed.  Many grammar and spelling errors; few or no examples or supporting facts.	Policy issue and background clearly stated.  Some grammar and spelling errors; some examples or supporting facts.	Clearly sets out the policy issue; explains how the issue is related to the general goals of the government.  Very few grammar and spelling errors; use of some good examples or supporting facts.	Clearly sets out the policy issue; explains how the issue is related to the general goals of the government, as well as its political importance.  No apparent grammar and spelling errors; use of many good examples or supporting facts.
<i>Recommendation text</i>	Inconsistent with case made in background.  Many grammar and spelling errors.	Consistent with case made in background.  Some grammar and spelling errors.	Consistent with case made in the background and explains how the issue is related to the general goals of the government.  Very few grammar and spelling errors.	Consistent with case made in the background and explains how the issue is related to the general goals of the government, as well as its political importance.  No apparent grammar and spelling errors.

**Cabinet (Cabinet Discussion and Decision)**

<b>Cabinet Discussion and Decision</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<b>Satisfactory (2)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Very Good (4)</b>
Discussion delivery	Mainly read the prepared notes; little expression in the voice or face.	Some parts of the prepared notes were read, some eye contact; voice and face had some expression.	Most of discussion was without reference to prepared notes; effort was made to look at several different points in the room; voice used tone and volume appropriately; face was expressive.	The discussion delivery was entirely without reference to notes; eye contact was frequent and natural; voice and whole body was convincingly used to make points and to raise colleagues' enthusiasm.
Discussion content	Ideas very difficult to understand; few or no examples or supporting facts.	Ideas somewhat difficult to understand; some examples or supporting facts.	Ideas were easy to understand; use of some good examples or supporting facts.	Ideas very clearly explained and structured; use of many good examples or supporting facts.

***Making Law in Canada*—Evaluation Rubric  
The Parliament (Debate and Vote)**

<b>Parliament Debate and Vote</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<b>Satisfactory (2)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Very Good (4)</b>
Debate delivery	Mainly read the prepared notes; little expression in the voice or face. Showed no passion for the issue.	Some parts of the prepared notes were read, some eye contact; voice and face had some expression. Showed some passion for the issue.	Most of discussion was without reference to prepared notes; effort was made to look at several different points in the room; voice used tone and volume appropriately; face was expressive. Showed passion for the issue.	The discussion delivery was entirely without reference to notes; eye contact was frequent and natural; voice and whole body was convincingly used to make points and to raise listeners' enthusiasm. Showed considerable passion for the issue in order to lend weight to arguments.
Discussion content	Ideas very difficult to understand; few or no examples or supporting facts.  Showed no grasp of the party's position.	Ideas somewhat difficult to understand; some examples or supporting facts.  Showed some grasp of the party's position.	Ideas were easy to understand; use of some good examples or supporting facts.  Showed a clear grasp of the party's position.	Ideas very clearly explained and structured; use of many good examples or supporting facts.  Showed a superior grasp of the party's position by linking debate to party's position on other related issues.