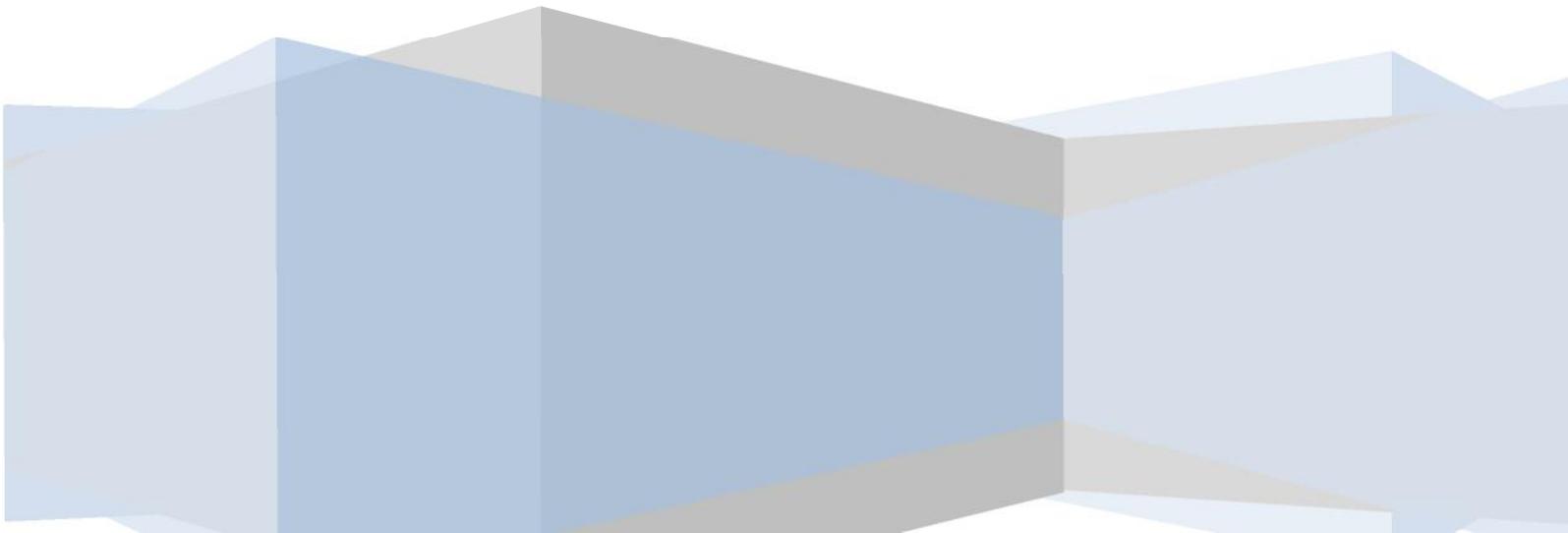




Lesson Plan: Political Parties

For Christian schools and home schools in Canada
(Grades 10 – 12)





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Comparing Canada's Political Parties

(Two 50 minute lessons)

Level – Grades 10 - 12

Applicable Courses: Social Studies

Overview

Canadian politics requires the organization of political parties – voluntary associations of individuals who agree to work together based on common ideas about public affairs. Political parties are membership based. Canadian citizens are able to buy a membership in a party and receive the privileges that are associated with their membership (such as choosing a candidate to run for office, choosing a leader, and voting on party policy). When a party has the majority of MP's in the House of Commons, it forms the government. The leader of the governing party becomes the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister selects some of the MP's in his or her party to serve as cabinet ministers – special positions responsible for various aspects of governing such as health or defence. The party with the second most number of MP's forms the official opposition.

There are many parties in Canada. The Liberals, Conservative, New Democrats, and Bloc Quebecois are the most well-known because they have a presence in Canada's House of Commons. But many other parties exist, such as the Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada, the Marijuana Party, and the Western Bloc Party. The sixth largest party in Canada is the Christian Heritage Party. They describe themselves by saying "The CHP is Canada's only pro-Life federal political party, and the only federal party that endorses the Judeo-Christian principles enshrined in the Canadian Constitution..." Individuals from Reformed churches were very involved in the creation of the CHP in the 1980's.

The two largest parties in Canada – the Liberals and Conservatives – are classified as "brokerage parties." This means that they try to reach out to as wide a variety of people as possible. In contrast to ideological parties, which run on specific principles such as environmental responsibility, brokerage parties are willing to make their policies adapt to the general consensus of Canadians.

Christians work within many different parties. Some choose to work for secular brokerage parties with the hope of using their power to influence Canada for the better. Others believe that the only option is a Christian party because the other parties require a compromise of faith. Choosing which party to support is an important decision that all Canadian citizens have a responsibility to consider.

Preparation and Materials

Students should be shown:

- 1) Policies from some of Canada's political parties (provided)
- 2) A chart comparing ideological and brokerage parties

For Further Study:

A very helpful guide (*How Canadians Govern Themselves*) which explains Canada's Parliament and how it functions is available on Parliament's website at

http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/AboutParl_Education.asp?Language=E.

Party Websites: A list of all of Canada's registered parties, along with links to their websites is available at

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

Procedure

- 1) Write the names of some of Canada's most well-known parties (Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Green, and CHP) on a board and ask students to list things that they think describe each party.
- 2) Show the chart provided which compares ideological parties with brokerage parties
- 3) Show the chart provided which compares the party policies on child care and ask how they reflect whether they are brokerage parties or ideological parties.
- 4) **Discussion:** Explain the importance of Christians using their vote as part of their service to this country. Invite students to bring forward reasons why it would be better for Christians to vote for a brokerage party or an ideological party. What are advantages and disadvantages to both? How do these advantages and disadvantages measure up to what the Bible says about our place in this world?
- 5) **Assignment:** Divide the class up into four to six groups, depending on the class size. Have each group represent one of the parties listed above. Select a current topic to debate (crime, definition of marriage, the environment etc.). Have each group research what the party policy would be for that issue. Have a 30 minute debate in which each group presents their policy, defends it, and gets two opportunities to respond to the other parties. Make sure that they stay true to the party policy rather than bring in their own perspectives.



Brokerage Parties vs. Ideological Parties

	Brokerage Party	Ideological Party
Examples	Liberal, Conservative	Green, CHP, Marxist-Leninist
Purpose	To win an election and govern	To advance an ideology
Size	Large – diverse composition	Smaller – more united on policy
Popularity	Almost always form governments. Gain the vast majority of votes.	Generally the smaller parties. They tend to attract support but it often does not materialize into votes.
Benefits	More likely to achieve power and have influence.	More committed to the values of the membership base, uncompromising in beliefs.
Drawbacks	Provides little leadership because it tends to follow public opinion. Policies change quickly.	Canada's "first-past-the-post" electoral system leaves most small ideological parties in the dust. They don't elect MP's and therefore don't have an opportunity to advance their agenda within government.



Comparing Parties on their Childcare Policies

Conservatives	Liberals	NDP	CHP
Implemented the Universal Child Care Benefit which gives \$1,200 per year to parents for every child under six.	Against the Child Care benefit – would prefer the money to go to new child care spaces	Lock in a program that provides early education and child care and that cannot be watered down with new governments	Responsibility of parents, not gov't to raise and educate children.
Provide \$250 million per year to provinces and territories for creating new child care spaces	When in gov't, promoted a 5 billion dollar plan to create a universal child care program	Provide a stable amount of money to provinces so they can develop more child care spaces.	In-home child care facilities are preferred rather than institutional child care.
Belief: Parents should have the support to raise children as they see fit, but gov't also has a role in providing child care spaces.	Belief: Families should be able to bring their children to government funded child care centres so that parents can work if they want.	Belief: State has the responsibility to provide government-funded child care for families.	Belief: Families should be caring for their children. It is not the state's responsibility.