



Preparing to vote

ACTIVITY



45 minutes
approximately

Weighing the issues

This activity requires voters in training to reflect on the future of their environment and on the issues that affect them. Participants will also become more aware of the importance of learning about where candidates stand on these issues.

OBJECTIVES

Recognize the importance of gathering information before making a choice

Become familiar with various sources of information

MATERIAL REQUIRED

✓ Internet access

LINKS TO THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Subject area: Languages

Competency: Read and listen to literary, popular and information-based texts

Broad area of learning: Media literacy

Focus of development: Understanding of media representations of reality

Broad area of learning: Citizenship and community life

Focus of development: Participation, cooperation and solidarity

Cross-curricular competencies:

Use information and exercise critical judgment

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY

Use the following questions to engage participants in a discussion, with the aim of assessing their knowledge of the current election campaign:

- In recent days, have you heard people close to you discussing the elections?
- Do you know who the candidates are?
- Can you name any sources of information on candidates, elections and current events in your community?

A BIT OF THEORY

During an election campaign, responsible citizens need to remain aware of what is going on, what is being proposed and what is being debated. This makes it possible to form an opinion on the different options available and, on polling day, to make an informed choice.

Various sources of information are available:

- print media (weekly and daily newspapers, magazines and other periodicals);
- radio and television;
- websites (news sites, political party sites, interest group sites, blogs, etc.);
- social media.

Not all sources are reliable

No matter where you get your information, you need to make sure it's reliable, relevant and accurate. There is an incredible amount of information available online! This can be convenient, but it also means that you need to be vigilant, think critically and verify sources.

Here are some key things to consider when determining if you can trust a piece of information:

- **The author is credible.** What is the author's title? Is the author a specialist in the field? Is the information published by an institution of higher learning, a professional association, a public or quasi-public agency, or a news organization? Those are all examples of reliable sources. Important clue: "Anonymous" sources are not credible sources.
- **The facts can be verified.** Rather than relying on just one source, be sure to corroborate the information. Have other media organizations reported the same news item? If so, the information is more likely to be reliable.

Weighing the issues

- **The information is up to date.** Pay attention to an article's publication date, along with the dates of any studies or references it mentions. For example, if an article refers to a study conducted several years ago, you should question the reliability of the information. Look for more recent studies on the same topic.
- **The content is objective.** Information presented in a neutral and objective manner tends to be more trustworthy. Also, if a headline seems a little too catchy, you should start asking questions!

Candidates and political parties

You can find out about the commitments made by candidates and parties by reading the information available on their website. Candidates and parties can also use different forms of advertising to promote their positions: television, radio and newspaper ads, pamphlets, door-to-door canvassing, press conferences, posters, etc. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are other popular platforms where candidates can showcase their plans, vision, and accomplishments.

Interest groups

Interest groups and the positions they take are another source of information on the issues raised during an election campaign. Such organizations defend certain rights or specific categories of people, while promoting specific causes or political ideas. You can either visit an interest group's website or keep an eye out for its statements in the media (for example, in newspapers or on radio and television) throughout the election campaign.

SUGGESTED STEPS

1. Brainstorm with participants by encouraging them to think about issues that affect them. Make a list of the issues they come up with.
2. Select four or five issues that participants feel particularly strongly about; in other words, issues they think incoming elected officials should prioritize.
3. Next, referring to the section titled “A Bit of Theory,” introduce participants to different ways of finding information.
4. Ask participants to remember the four or five issues they have identified. Over the next few days, encourage them to become better informed by listening to what each candidate or political party is proposing with respect to these issues. Remind participants that critical thinking is key to determining whether the information they find is reliable, relevant and accurate.

SUGGESTIONS

You can wrap up the activity at this point, but you can also keep going.

On a subsequent day, ask participants to share any information they have been able to find on the current election campaign, especially information on candidates, parties and campaign promises. This can include the following:

- summaries of discussions with people close to them;
- details of radio or television advertisements;
- articles or reports published in a newspaper;
- excerpts from websites;
- social media posts.

Using the different sources of information gathered by participants, work with them to determine what each candidate or party has proposed in relation to each of the identified issues.

Why not use the information to create a large-scale diagram? It will help everyone make up their mind and vote for the candidate who best reflects their interests and aspirations. See the diagram template on the next page.



EXAMPLE

Poster

Weighing the issues

<div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">CANDIDATE OR PARTY 1</div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <p>The candidate or party proposes:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">CANDIDATE OR PARTY 2</div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <p>The candidate or party proposes:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">CANDIDATE OR PARTY 3</div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <p>The candidate or party proposes:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> </div>	<div style="background-color: #D8BFD8; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">CANDIDATE OR PARTY 4</div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <p>The candidate or party proposes:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> ISSUE 1 <hr/><hr/><hr/> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> ISSUE 2 <hr/><hr/><hr/> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> ISSUE 3 <hr/><hr/><hr/> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> ISSUE 4 <hr/><hr/><hr/> </div>
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