

# CHV20 Unit 1: Citizenship and Government

## Activity 8: The Electoral Process

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### Overview

By educating voters about the electoral process and encouraging them to cast ballots, democracy guides the actions of citizens to participate in the selection of government and the development of government policy.

### Lesson

#### *The "Franchise" or Right to Vote*

The term franchise simply refers to the act of gaining the right to vote. This right has not been achieved without sacrifice. Throughout history, Canada has denied certain groups the right to vote. Today, we see our democratic beliefs expressed in the universal franchise (the right to vote for all citizens over the age of 18). People have been discriminated in Canada based on race, sex, wealth, religion, age employment, disability, and imprisonment. Even fifty years after Confederation, women were completely disenfranchised. It took the involvement of women in the suffrage movement to educate and influence the public about women's status as equal members of society.

#### *One Vote Matters*

The right to vote is one of the cornerstones of a democratic government. The reason for the importance of the vote is to provide citizens the opportunity to choose their own government.

Occasionally citizens can develop an apathetic sense that in a society of millions of people, a single vote has little or no meaning. Consider this however - In the United States (a nation of well over 300 million people), during the 2000 federal election, the Presidency was decided by a mere 537 votes in the state of Florida, resulting in the election of George W. Bush.

#### *Canadian Elections and Three Levels of Government*

In Canada, because we have three levels of government, we have three sets of elections that must take place at certain times. **Elections Canada** is the organization responsible for conducting elections at the federal level in Canada.

At the provincial and federal levels, an election must take place within five years. The decision to call an election is up to the Prime Minister for a federal election and the Premier for a provincial election. Elections at the municipal level must take place every three years.

To learn more about **Elections Canada** and the voting process, visit its official website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca) and click on the **Voters** tab on the top left of the page to do some research.

## Assignment

1. Who has the right to vote in Canada?
2. Why is it important to vote and why does it make a difference?
3. What organization is responsible conducting federal elections in Canada?