GET READY FOR THE QUIZ...
Quiz for Lesson #2

Which ideology is associated with:

1. ...Nazi’s?
2. ...no private land?
3. ...a large role for gov’t in the economy & social welfare?
4. ...a laissez faire approach to the economy?
5. ...both economic freedom, but also strong social welfare?

6. Which major Canadian political party is the farthest Right?
7. Which major Canadian political party is the farthest Left?
8. Which major Canadian political party is more-or-less central?
9. Which political party is in power (forms federal gov’t) now?
10. Which major political party can be considered socialist?
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

LESSON OUTLINE & OBJECTIVES (don’t copy)
• In today’s lesson we will learn how people can influence government, and look in-depth at the electoral system.
• you will learn:
  – Methods you can use to influence gov’t
  – How different methods are appropriate for different types of influence and situations
  – How elections work
  – Rules regarding money
  – Various electoral systems
  – What election results mean

Big Questions:
1. How can a citizen change a action taken by government?
2. What are the stages to an election?
3. What are the two different outcomes from an election? What are the pros and cons of each?
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

There are many ways we can influence government.

1. VOTE in elections!
2. Contact your Representative (MP, MLA, Councilor)
3. Join a political party
4. Pressure groups or lobbyist
5. Civil disobedience
6. Court action
7. Media campaigns
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Contact your Representative (MP, MLA, Councilor)

• Elected representatives work in government on our behalf; it is their job to represent you.
• You can visit their constituency office or call them on the phone. If they are not available, they have staff who can help you.
• You can write a letter or present them with a petition.

Do you know who your representatives are?

West Kelowna City Council

Smith-Hudson i-Teach

Ben Stewart MLA

Dan Albas MP
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Join a Political Party

• One way to influence politics is to join a political party.
• Most parties require a small fee, but often students can join free.
• Members vote to select a local candidate (often as young as 14)
• Members can go to meetings, be on the local riding council, or volunteer during elections.
• Members can represent the local riding at national conventions, or even run to become a local candidate in an election.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Pressure Groups and Lobbyists
- Organizations or companies can exert pressure on politicians.
- Their positions reflect the opinions of many people, so politicians take them very seriously.
- Often they will hire lobbyists, (representatives), who meet with politicians to help convince them of the importance of an issue.

Civil Disobedience
- You have the right to protest any government policy or plan you feel is not appropriate.
- Often, to make a point, protestors will peacefully disobey laws or court orders to make a point.
- If a group is large enough and the cause reasonable, politicians take notice and are sometimes under pressure to address the issue.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Court Action

• Sometimes provincial or federal laws will not respect the rules set out in the constitution, or they will violate individual rights.
• Citizens can challenge laws in the court system, as long as they have a reasonable case.
• If the courts agree, the law can be overturned.

Media Campaigns

• If individuals organize around a specific issue, they can sometimes generate public interest.
• This is done through public events, fundraising, and holding press conferences.
• If they are successful, they can generate enough media coverage to motivate public interest, and therefore the interest of politicians.
VOTE

• Voting is the only action considered to be BOTH a right and a responsibility of citizens.
• By voting, you ensure your voice is heard.
• By voting, you ensure that others don't have undue influence

When fewer people vote, the more likely it is that special interests can influence the outcome.

• Do not underestimate the value of your vote, both in representing your voice and ensuring that the democratic system works the way it was intended.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Elections and the Electoral Process

- Any Canadian Citizen, age 18 or older, can vote in a federal election.
- Federal and Provincial Governments hold elections at least every five years.
- The Prime Minister can choose a time that is convenient for his party, (high popularity numbers), or may be forced into it if a major bill is defeated in the House of Commons.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Elections and the Electoral Process *(continued)*

- The Prime Minister then asks the Governor General to dissolve Parliament.
- Canadians do not vote directly for the Prime Minister.
- Canadians vote for a candidate to represent their riding or constituency.
- The party that has the most elected MP’s gets to form the next government.
- The leader of that party becomes the Prime Minister.
- Between elections, if an MP dies or retires, an election will be held in that riding only. This is called a **By-election**.
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Elections Have Six Stages

1. **Dissolution**: the session of the House of Commons comes to an end, and MP’s effectively lose their jobs.

2. **Enumeration**: Chief Electoral Officer is in charge of this stage, preparing the voter’s list.

3. **Nomination**: candidates are selected for each party in each **riding** (geographic areas representing about 100,000 people)

4. **Campaigning**: candidates are given media coverage, make speeches, promote their **party platform**, & hold meetings.

5. **Balloting**: voters go to **polling stations** to vote, and mark an “X” by the name of the candidate they want to represent their **riding**.

6. **Tabulation**: votes are counted. This can take a long time. **Recounts** can take several days. BC’s results are always **last**.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Elections & Money

• Prior to and during an election, candidates and parties raise money to help them run a campaign.
• Although important, these contributions can cause problems.
• Many people feel that corporations, organizations, and individuals give money to ensure that they have influence.
• Often the candidate with the most money wins an election, rather than the one with the best ideas.
• The Elections Expenses Act of 1974 sets rules for how money is collected by political candidates and parties.
• All donations over $200/year must be made public.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Electoral Systems

First-Past-the-Post
• This is the system used in federal and provincial elections
• A candidate only needs one more vote than the closest competitor.
• That means you can win with less than 50% of the vote if there are more than two candidates.

Proportional Representation
• If a party earns 43% of the popular vote, that party gets to have 43% of the seats in the legislature.
• This system is not used in Canada, but is more representative.
• Opponents suggest that MP’s would not have a direct connection to the people in each riding.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Single Transferable Vote

• This is a system suggested by a group of BC citizens.
• Although defeated in the last provincial election, proponents are hoping it gains popularity.
• In this system, voters can chose candidates based on ordered preference.
• Once one candidate gets 50% of the vote, the voter’s second choice is recorded.
• It is possible for a riding to elect more than one MLA.
• This system is more complicated, but very well balanced.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Election Outcomes

Majority Government

- In a federal election, if a party wins more than 50% of the available seats, they have a majority government.
- In a majority government, as long as all MP’s vote with the party, the government can not be defeated.
- This means that the government is almost guaranteed the ability to pass any law it proposes.
- That is why it is important for a party to maintain discipline.
- Every party has a “Whip”, a senior MP who tries to keep all MP’s voting with party policy.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Minority Government

• In a federal election, if a party has won the most seats, but still has less than 50% of the total, they have a minority government.
• That government must make alliances with other parties to stay in power.
• Some people argue that a minority government is more responsible than a majority, because they must work with other parties and cooperate.
Lesson #3: Government, Citizens & Elections

Questions
For questions 1-4, list ways citizens can influence government:
1. One method is…
2. A second method is…
3. A third method is…
4. A fourth method is…
5. On average, how many people does a riding represent?
6. Politicians have to report donations over what amount?
7. To call an election, what does the PM ask the Governor General to do?
8. How old do you have to be to vote in a federal election?
9. Where do you go to vote?
10. In our current system of “First Past the Post”, how many votes are needed to win?