

Doining Political Parties How does this enable a Canadian to influence his or her government? Being a member of a party gives you the right to Nominate your party's candidate in your riding. Vote for your party's candidate in your riding. Political parties have youth wings. Youth wings have influence in the party because party leaders want to attract youth - to do so, they must show that they are listening to them.

So why do people join political parties?

- They want to improve the **quality of life** in their country, region, or community.
- They agree with the **views** of the party.
- They want political **power and influence**.

Why do only 2% of Canadians join political parties?

- Most Canadians see politics and parties as being corrupt.
- They prefer to join non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have specific goals for improving people's lives.

Making their Views Known

How can a Canadian let people in government know what his or her opinions are?

- Contact your local MP or MLA.
 - Politicians can be contacted by phone, fax, email, or even a visit to their office.
- Call in to a local **radio station** or write a letter to the editor of a **newspaper**.
- Contact high ranking **civil servants** who conduct the daily business of government.

Joining a Special Interest Group (Pressure Group or Lobby)

What is a pressure group?

- An organization made up of people who share a certain viewpoint.
- They want to influence government in order to **promote** this viewpoint.

How do Pressure Groups Influence the Government?

- By providing information to the government through polls, reports, research, and advice.
 - Problem pressure groups have goals they want to achieve so their advice and research is usually not objective.

○ By using **lobbyists**.

- A lobbyist is someone who is paid by a pressure group to speak on its behalf to important members of the government, the media, and other pressure groups.
- A good lobbyist will have many high-level **political contacts**.

• By taking the government to **court**.

○ Pressure groups can take a government to court if they believe that a law is **unconstitutional**.

There are two types of pressure groups:

- Institutionalized Pressure Group: Permanent, wellestablished organizations.
 - Examples include Greenpeace, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Labour Congress ...
- **Issue Based Pressure Group**: Temporary organizations with limited aims that disband once the aim has been accomplished.
 - An example would be neighbours forming a pressure group to force the government to install a traffic light in their neighbourhood.

Why is lobbying dangerous?

- It gives a small number of people a great amount of power over the government's decisions.
- Governments often listen to the demands of a lobby at the expense of the needs of the **majority** of Canadians.

Where do pressure groups get their money?

- Most large pressure groups are self-financing. The members pay for the cost of all of the pressure group's activities. They can then offer some of this money in the form of a donation to the party that best represents their interests.
- Some pressure groups are kept alive through government funding. This weakens the pressure group, as it cannot afford to oppose government policies.



What is the media? • The methods of communicating ideas and information in our society. • Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, websites...

How is media able to influence government?

- Canadians get almost all of their day to day information about government from the media.
- The Canadian government gets most of its information about Canadians from the media.
- The media can influence government policies:
 - When the media decides to focus a lot of attention on a particular issue, the government is forced to take action on this issue.
 - Example: would governments be doing anything about global warming if the media never reported it?

How can Canadians use the media to influence government?

- Important issues usually get ignored until the media pays attention to them.
- To attract the attention of the media, people usually organize events such as marches and protests.
- When TV cameras appear at these events, the people involved usually begin to **shout slogans and chant** so that their message will appear in the news.

Can a powerful media be dangerous?

O YES!

- In Canada, media ownership has become concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy corporations.
- This means that a few wealthy businesses control almost all the information we get about our government, society and world.
- The question then is, will this small group of people give us information to promote the interests of all Canadians, or will it focus of **promoting its own interests**?

Civil Disobedience

What is Civil Disobedience?

- Intentionally **breaking or refusing to keep a law** because you believe that it is unjust.
- What are the three principles of civil disobedience?
- It should **not involve violence**.
- It should be directed against laws that are seriously harmful.
- Willingness to face punishment shows the strengths of one's beliefs.
- What are examples of civil disobedience?
- O Sit-ins
- Blocking a road
- Chaining yourself to a tree