



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.

There are two types of pressure groups:

- **Institutionalized Pressure Group:** Permanent, well-established 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.

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**.

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.



Influencing Government - Part 2
Using the media

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?

- 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?

- **Sit-ins**
- **Blocking a road**
- **Chaining yourself to a tree**

