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Activity 7: Municipal Elections and Citizenship

Comparing the Federal and Municipal Election Processes and Exploring Citizenship and the Right to Vote

One of the most important rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship is voting for elected representatives in the election process. This right is guaranteed in Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. New Canadians are often provided with resources about the federal election process; however, understanding both provincial and municipal elections processes is also of vital importance for responsible citizenship.

This activity is designed to offer a deeper exploration of the municipal election process in the City of Toronto by comparing and contrasting it with the Canadian federal election process. You will then explore critical questions about citizenship and the right to vote in municipal elections through a Four Corners and individual writing activity.

In order to complete the first part of this activity, you will need to access:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada's study guide, *Discover Canada – The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*, which can be found at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/discover/>.
- The City of Toronto's Toronto Elections website at <http://www.toronto.ca/elections>

Your tasks are to:

1. Research the information with respect to federal elections found on pages 30-35 in the *Discover Canada – The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship* publication, as well as that of the municipal elections process of the City of Toronto found on the website noted above. Fill in the corresponding sections of the *Comparing the Federal and Municipal Election Processes* graphic organizer to inform your understanding of similarities and differences.
2. Compare and contrast your research information with respect to federal and municipal elections by completing the Venn Diagram.

Municipal Elections and Citizenship Activity

Comparing the Federal and Municipal Election Processes		
QUESTION	FEDERAL ELECTIONS	MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS (City of Toronto)
1. When are elections required to be held?		
2. How many electoral districts are there? What are they formally called at each level of government?		
3. Who is eligible to be a candidate in the election? What are the requirements of candidacy?		
4. Who is eligible to vote in the election? What are the eligibility requirements?		
5. Who is placed on the Voters' Lists? Provide an example of how this is done.		
6. What is a voter information card? What type of information is on it?		

Comparing the Federal and Municipal Election Processes		
QUESTION	FEDERAL ELECTIONS	MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS (City of Toronto)
7. What can you do if you do not receive a voter information card? Who can you contact?		
8. What can you do if you don't or can't vote on election day? What voting options are provided to citizens?		
9. On election day, where do you go to cast your vote? What do you have to bring with you?		
10. How do you cast your vote?		
11. Who is allowed to know how you voted? Explain your answer with details about how rights are protected during the ballot process.		
12. What happens after the polls close and voting has ended? Describe the process of how election results are determined.		
13. How do citizens find out the official results?		

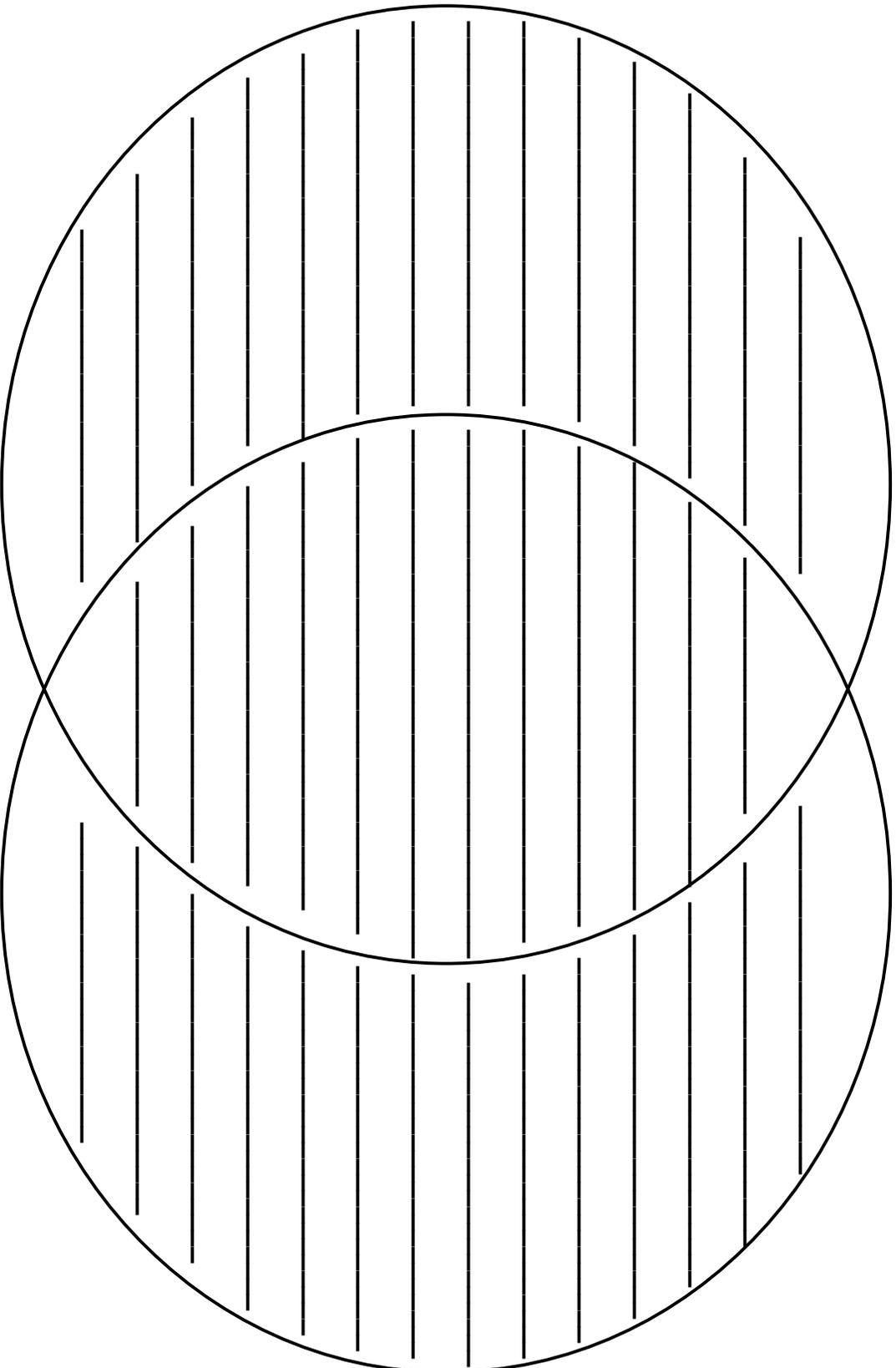
Municipal Elections and Citizenship Activity - Comparing the Federal and Municipal Election Processes

Compare and contrast the information with respect to federal and municipal elections by completing the Venn Diagram

FEDERAL

SIMILARITIES

MUNICIPAL



Municipal Elections and Citizenship Activity - Comparing the Federal and Municipal Election Processes - Answer Sheet

Federal	Similarities	Municipal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal elections must be take place on the third Monday in October every four years following the most recent general election unless the Prime Minister decides otherwise • There are 338 electoral districts in Canada in 2016 • Districts are formally known as ridings • Canadian citizens 18 years or older are eligible to be a candidate in the election • The electoral candidate who receives the most votes becomes the MP for that riding • To be eligible to vote you must be a Canadian citizen 18 years or older on voting day, who is on the voters' list • Government of Canada employs a first-past-the-post system, which elects candidates who receive more votes than any other candidate • Elections Canada creates a voters' list based on the National Register of Electors. The list is a permanent database of Canadian citizens 18 years of age and older who are qualified to vote in federal elections and referendums. When anyone applies for Canadian citizenship, they can check a box on the application form to give consent to the transfer of their name, address, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections are scheduled every four years • Clear geographical areas mark the boundaries of electoral districts • Candidates must be Canadian citizens who are 18 years old or older • Eligible voters must be Canadian citizens who are 18 years old or older • Eligible voters must be on the voting lists. Canadian citizens on the list will receive information cards • If a Canadian/ Torontonian citizen cannot or does not want to vote on the scheduled election day, they can vote at the advance polls or by special ballot. The dates and location are on their voter information card • Voters have to bring their information card and proof of their identity and address to the polling station • At the polling station, voters will individually go behind a screen to mark their vote • The voter information card provides the voters information on when and where they can vote and the number to call if they require an interpreter or other special services during the voting process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Elections happen every four years on the fourth Monday of October • Toronto follows the federal riding boundaries. The TDSB uses the same 22 ridings for their 22 wards. City Council divides each federal riding in half so there are 44 city council wards • Candidates must be Canadian citizens, 18 years or older, a resident of Toronto or own or lease property in the city of Toronto (or the spouse of the owner or lessee), eligible to vote, and not disqualified to hold office by any legislation • To be eligible to vote a Canadian citizen at least 18 years old must be a resident of the City of Toronto, a non-resident owner or tenant of land in the City of Toronto or their spouse • The City of Toronto employs a first-past-the-post system, which elects candidates who receive more votes than any other candidate • Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is responsible for preparing the preliminary list of electors for each municipality. Toronto Elections receives this preliminary list from MPAC and creates and posts the voters' list on September 1st.

<p>sex and date of birth to Elections Canada. Canadians, eighteen year or older, can request to be added to the National Register of Electors on their federal income tax form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On election day, Canadian Citizens should go to the polling station located on their information card • To cast a vote, mark an “X” in the circle next to the name of the candidate of choice. The voter is to fold the ballot and present it to the poll officials. The poll official will take the ballot number and hand the ballot back to the voter to deposit in the ballot box • The leader of the party with the support of the most M.P.s in the House of Commons becomes the Prime Minister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a Canadian citizen, who wishes to vote, does not receive a voter information card, they should call the local elections office to get on the voters’ list. For the federal elections, eligible voters can call Elections Canada, in Ottawa, at 1 800 463-6868 for their local elections office number. Municipal eligible voters are to call Toronto Election Services after September 1st • Votes are secret and voters are not required to discuss who they voted for with anyone. Voters have the right to a secret ballot and no one is allowed to watch the voter while marking his/her ballot • When the polls close, every ballot is counted and the election results are made public on television or on the appropriate websites: (www.elections.ca) for federal results and (www.toronto.ca/elections) for municipal results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When electors go to the voting station on Election Day, they will be given a ballot with three offices on it. They will have the option to vote for their local Councillor in their ward, the local School Board Trustee of the School Board that they support, and the Mayor. Every elector in the city will have the same options for Mayor, but only electors living in each ward will see the Councillor choices and Trustee choices for their ward • Mark your ballot by connecting the head and tail of the arrow next to the candidate of your choice. Place your marked ballot in the secrecy folder. Go to the official who will insert your ballot into the vote tabulator (vote counting equipment). Your vote is then recorded and counted. All vote totals are stored in the tabulator until the voting location closes at which time a results tape will be produced by the vote tabulation machines and checked by the D.R.O
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Municipal Elections and Citizenship Activity

Exploring Citizenship and the Right to Vote

FOUR CORNERS ACTIVITY

1. **Read** the **facts** presented in the box below about voting rights in Toronto.
2. **Think** about the issues and your position on the concluding statement.

A **non-resident** owner of land in the City of Toronto - or their spouse – **can vote** in Toronto municipal elections. This means that people **who do not live** in Toronto, **but own property** there, are allowed to vote...

HOWEVER

People who live in the City of Toronto **are not allowed to vote** in municipal elections unless they are Canadian citizens. Landed immigrants or permanent residents who are not Canadian citizens, for example, **cannot vote** in municipal elections **even if they have lived in the city for years**.

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THESE VOTING RIGHTS ARE FAIR AND JUSTIFIED, OTHERS THINK THAT THEY ARE UNFAIR AND SHOULD BE CHANGED.

3. Based on the facts and statement above, take a position by walking to a corner of the room to indicate whether you:

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4. In your corner group, **discuss** your reasons for taking the position you have chosen and **write** a defence of your group's point of view on chart paper indicating:

- Reasons for your position.
- Arguments and evidence that justifies your point of view.
- Whether you think these voting rights are fair or unfair.
- Who they benefit and who they discriminate against, and if this is reasonable.
- Recommendations for changes to voting rights, if any.

