

## Video 11: Why is policy-making hard?

### Curriculum Links

This video series fits within the following high school courses across Canada. Teachers are encouraged to explore further connections to other courses in their province or territory.

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<b>Alberta</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade 9 Social Studies</li><li>Social Studies 10-1 or 10-2</li><li>Social Studies 20-1 or 20-2</li><li>Social Studies 30-1 or 30-2</li></ul>	<b>British Columbia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Social Studies 11</li><li>Political Science 12</li></ul>
<b>Manitoba</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade 9: Social Studies</li><li>Grade 12: Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability</li></ul>	<b>New Brunswick</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Civics 10</li><li>Political Science 120</li><li>Canadian Law 120</li></ul>
<b>Newfoundland</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Social Studies 1201/1202</li><li>Social Studies 2201</li><li>Social Studies 3201/3202</li><li>Ethics and Social Justice 2106</li><li>Career Development 2202</li></ul>	<b>Northwest Territories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade 9 Social Studies</li><li>Social Studies 10-1 or 10-2</li><li>Social Studies 20-1 or 20-2</li><li>Social Studies 30-1 or 30-2</li></ul>
<b>Nova Scotia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Citizenship Education 9</li><li>Global Politics 12</li><li>Advanced Global Politics 12</li><li>Law 12</li></ul>	<b>Nunavut</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade 9 Social Studies</li><li>Social Studies 10-1 or 10-2</li><li>Social Studies 20-1 or 20-2</li><li>Social Studies 30-1 or 30-2</li></ul>
<b>Ontario</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade 10: Civics &amp; Citizenship</li><li>Grade 11: Politics in Action: Making Change</li><li>Grade 12: Canadian and International Politics</li></ul>	<b>Prince Edward Island</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade 9 Social Studies</li><li>Canadian Studies CAS401A</li></ul>
<b>Québec</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Monde Contemporain</li><li>Sensibilisation à l'entrepreneuriat</li><li>Histoire du Québec et du Canada</li></ul>	<b>Saskatchewan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Social Studies 10</li><li>History and Social Studies 30</li><li>Law 30</li></ul>
<b>Yukon</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Social Studies 11</li><li>Political Science 12</li></ul>	

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## The Big Question

Why is policy making hard?

In video 11 we look at why public policy making is difficult. Students will hear from [Action Canada Fellows](#), young leaders in Canada all involved or interested in public policy, about the challenging considerations that need to be taken into account when making public policy. The activities in this Teacher Guide will help students think more deeply about how public policy must serve the needs of many different communities and balance competing values. More questions may arise after watching this video, teachers and students are encouraged to watch the rest of the Policy 101 video series to learn more. (Specific focus, [Module 6: How does public policy get created?](#), [Module 7: Who else plays a role in public policy?](#) and Module 12: Why are there different policies in different places?)

## Learning Goals

Upon completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Analyze the many needs and perspectives to be considered when designing public policy.

## Materials

You will need the following materials to complete the activities described in this Teacher Guide.

- Access to technology for video viewing
  - [Video 11: Why is policy making hard?](#)
- Printed video transcript PDFs (if using)
  - These can be helpful for students who need support following the video, for English or French language learners or simply for annotation purposes
- A space large enough for the whole class to sit in a circle
- 5 chairs
- [Appendix 1](#): Rogersville, New Brunswick for each student
- [Appendix 2](#): Rogersville Review for each student (optional)

## Pre-Video Activity

Tackle this activity before watching the video.

Minds On

Whole Group, 15 minutes

1. As a group, discuss the following. Pause after each question to allow students time to consider the question and share back to the whole group as desired.
  - a. Consider a time when you were part of a group that had different wants or needs. This could be a time when:
    - i. You were trying to figure out where to order food from with your friends.
    - ii. Your family was deciding what to do on the weekend.

- iii. You were deciding with your family what screen time guidelines make sense in your household (e.g. no cell phones at the dinner table, no TV until homework is complete, etc.).
- b. How did you come to a decision or consensus?
- c. Was everyone happy? Why or why not?

### Post-Video Activity

After watching the video, dive into these post-video activities to further discussions and deepen learning.

Town Hall Circle: Rogersville, New Brunswick

Whole Group – Small Group – Whole Group, 30 minutes

1. Re-watch the example of diversity policies in Rogersville, New Brunswick given by Isabelle. As a class summarize the facts given in this example.
2. Hand out [Appendix 1: Rogersville, New Brunswick](#) to your class. Review it together.  
*NOTE TO TEACHER: This is adapted from an article in the [Rogersville Review](#). Though not necessary, if you would like to review the article you can find it in [Appendix 2: Rogersville Review](#).*
  - a. The Rogersville city council has to approve the budget for the year ahead and there are many demands from different groups and departments in the city. The elected officials must make a choice, trying to do what is best for citizens with the limited resources and information they have. In addition, there has not been an increase in property tax in many years. The city cannot afford to cover its expenses. To balance the budget and make these initiatives happen they also need to increase property tax. Even with a property tax increase, the city cannot pursue all the options. At least one must be rejected. Here is what elected leaders are being asked to consider in their budget:
    - i. Diversity Programs: There are requests for programs and policies to encourage diversity, whether in terms of gender, the LGBTQ+ community, or women in general, to ensure different demographics feel welcome and feel empowered to have a strong voice and take their place in the community.
    - ii. Parks and Recreation: Two parks in the city need new restrooms. The current restrooms are broken. Parents who bring their kids to the park need a functioning restroom for their children.
    - iii. Infrastructure: Stretches of sidewalk in the city are damaged and need serious maintenance. Currently they are so damaged that they are inaccessible for people in wheelchairs or the elderly using a cart to do their groceries.
    - iv. City Employee Contract: City employees have not had a raise in five years. Their contract is up for renewal, and they are asking for an increase in salary and health insurance.

3. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one perspective.
  - a. LGBTQ+ and women's group
  - b. Parents' group
  - c. Accessibility advocacy group
  - d. Union that represents city employees
  - e. Citizen group that focuses on cost of living in Rogersville
4. Have students discuss the following prompts from their assigned group's perspective. Have each group appoint one person to summarize their decision to the class.
  - a. What does your group want out of public policies and initiatives in Rogersville?
  - b. Consider each initiative and ask yourself:
    - i. What are the benefits?
    - ii. What are the downsides?
    - iii. Does this initiative meet the needs of your group?
  - c. Final decision: Based on the perspective of your group, what initiative would you reject? Why?
5. Arrange chairs in a circle, providing one chair per group. The person assigned to summarize for each group sits in the chair. The other students then form a larger standing circle around the chairs. Make it clear that each student in the class will have an opportunity to be heard if they wish to enter the discussion - students can only speak when they have entered the circle and are seated. Then, each representative summarizes their group's final decision.
6. After all perspectives have been summarized, invite students seated in the circle to comment on what they have heard or to ask one of their peers a question. Students in the outer circle are then allowed to enter the conversation by "tapping" the shoulder of someone in their own group and taking their seat. The only way to enter or leave the discussion is by this process.
7. After the discussion comes to a close, debrief as a class with the following prompts.
  - a. What did you learn from this activity?
  - b. How did your ideas about the topic change during this activity, if at all? Explain what caused your ideas to change or why you think your ideas did not change.
  - c. What does "perspective" mean? Where does our perspective come from? How does our perspective shape the way we see the world? Draw on particular examples from this activity when answering these questions.

### Elected Officials Decision

Whole Group, 15 minutes

*NOTE: This activity is an optional continuation of the above activity. The activity above must be facilitated first for the following activity to make sense.*

1. Tell the class that you will now be considering the Rogersville, New Brunswick example from the perspective of an elected official who has to make the final decision. Remember,

the elected officials must make a choice, trying to do what is best for citizens with the limited resources and information they have. They also want to be re-elected. In addition, there has not been an increase in property tax in many years. The city cannot afford to cover its expenses. In order to make these initiatives happen they also need to increase property tax. Even with a property tax increase, the city cannot pursue all the options. One must be rejected.

2. As a group, discuss the following. Pause after each question to allow students time to consider the question and share back to the whole group as desired.
  - a. Considering the perspectives of each group, what initiative would meet the needs of the most people? Why?
  - b. Considering the perspectives of each group, what initiative would be easiest to reject? Why?
  - c. Overall, what initiatives would you include in your budget to implement? Why? Remember at least one must be rejected.
  - d. Consider the group(s) that may not be happy with your decision. How could you connect with them to help them understand your decision?

### Extension Activity

Interested in continuing the learning? Try the activities below.

Town Hall Circle: School Policy Perspectives

Whole Group, 30 minutes

*NOTE: If you have already completed the Town Hall Circle activity above this will be a familiar format for your class.*

1. As a class, review your school's cell phone use policy. *NOTE TO TEACHER: You can use a different more top of mind school policy as an example (e.g. uniforms, school start time).*
2. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one perspective.
  - a. Parents
  - b. Teachers
  - c. Students
  - d. Mental health non-profits
  - e. Meta (or another technology company)
3. Have each group discuss the following prompts from their assigned group's perspective. Have each group appoint one person to summarize their group's perspective to the class.
  - a. What are the benefits of the cell phone policy?
  - b. What are the downsides of the cell phone policy?
  - c. What does your group want out of school policies? Does the cell phone policy meet your needs?
  - d. Overall, does your group agree with the cell phone policy? Why or why not?
4. Arrange chairs in a circle, providing one chair per group. The person assigned to summarize for each group sits in the chair. The other students then form a larger standing

circle around the chairs. Make it clear that each student in the class will have an opportunity to be heard if they wish to enter the discussion - students can only speak when they have entered the circle and are seated. Then, each representative summarizes their group's perspective.

5. After all perspectives have been summarized, invite students seated in the circle to comment on what they have heard or to ask one of their peers a question. Students in the outer circle are then allowed to enter the conversation by "tapping" the shoulder of someone in their own group and taking their seat. The only way to enter or leave the discussion is by this process.
6. After the discussion comes to a close, debrief as a class with the following prompts.
  - a. What did you learn from this activity?
  - b. How did your ideas about the topic change during this activity, if at all? Explain what caused your ideas to change or why you think your ideas did not change.
  - c. What does "perspective" mean? Where does our perspective come from? How does our perspective shape the way we see the world? Draw on particular examples from this activity when answering these questions.

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### *About the Policy 101 Video Series*

*The Policy 101 Series breaks down public policy into digestible content for students through engaging videos, podcasts, and teacher guides. These modules empower students to learn the basics of public policy and critically analyze its implications. The series aims to sow the seeds for a future where youth play an active role in shaping the policies that shape their lives.*

## Appendix 1: Rogersville, New Brunswick

The Rogersville city council has to approve the budget for the year ahead and there are many demands from different groups and departments in the city. The elected officials must make a choice, trying to do what is best for citizens with the limited resources and information they have. In addition, there has not been an increase in property tax in many years. The city cannot afford to cover its expenses. To make these initiatives happen they also need to increase property tax. Even with a property tax increase, the city cannot pursue all the options. At least one must be rejected.

Here is what elected leaders are being asked to consider in their budget:

1. **Diversity Policies:** There are requests for programs and policies to encourage diversity, whether in terms of gender, the LGBTQ+ community, or women in general, to ensure different demographics feel welcome and feel empowered to have a strong voice and take their place in the community.
2. **Parks and Recreation:** Two parks in the city need new restrooms. The current restrooms are broken. Parents who bring their kids to the park need a functioning restroom for their children.
3. **Infrastructure:** Stretches of sidewalk in the city are damaged and need serious maintenance. Currently they are so damaged that they are inaccessible for people in wheelchairs or the elderly using a cart to do their groceries.
4. **City Employee Contract:** City employees have not had a raise in five years. Their contract is up for renewal, and they are asking for an increase in salary and health insurance.

## Appendix 2: Rogersville Review

### [First reading of 2024-25 Rogersville budget approved with 35 cent tax increase](#)

- Jun 13, 2024

With several major projects in the works the Rogersville Board of Mayor and Aldermen voted on June 11 to approve the city's first property tax increase since 2010.

On June 11 the BMA voted 6-0 to approve the first reading of the 2024-25 budget with a 35 cent property tax increase. That would increase the Rogersville property tax rate from \$1.4865 to \$1.8365.

For a residential property valued at \$100,000, this proposed 35 cent tax hike would increase their annual property tax bill by \$87.50.

The 35 cent property tax increase is projected to generate \$436,000 in new revenue.

The BMA scheduled a special called meeting for Friday, June 28 at 1 p.m. to hold the required public hearing on the budget, followed by consideration of the second and final reading of the budget.

The biggest new expenditures in the proposed 2024-25 budget are matching funds for two City Park grants.

Rogersville was awarded a \$500,000 Local Parks and Recreation Fund grant which must be matched with another \$500,000 in local funds to build two new restroom facilities, a concession stand, and new playground equipment at the City Park.

Rogersville was also awarded a \$713,268 Community Development Block Grant which must be matched with \$85,909 in local funds for sidewalks and paving the City Park, including creating new pickleball courts.

Overall those matching grants total \$585,909 in 2024-25, which would more than eliminate the new revenue generated by the property tax increase next year.

'Don't have enough money coming in'

Vice Mayor Brian Hartness, who proposed the property tax increase, noted that the city is planning other major developments. For example, Rogersville's proposed community center project, which went dormant in 2020 after COVID hit, was revived this year.

In May the BMA was presented with a revised plan for the community center with an estimated price tag of \$16.5 million. That project is not addressed in the 2024-25 budget, but if the city's proposed timeline holds true the BMA will be looking at major expenditures in 2025-26.

"Each year we come to the time to vote (on the budget), it's also a time to look if we need to have some type of a tax increase to cover some of these capital outlay projects we're looking at," Hartness told the board. "It's been tough working with what monies we've got. We do a lot with the people we've got hired. We know what kind of projects we're looking at here in the future. We know we don't have enough money coming in to cover that, or be able to pave some more roads or hire some more people."

Hartness added, "I think we all understand what we've got before us, and what projects we're trying to have. We've got to be able to afford to do them."

#### General Fund by the numbers

One penny on the Rogersville property tax rate generates approximately \$12,476.

Budgeted expenditures for 2024-25 are proposed at \$8,742,424, which is up from \$6,927,181 in the current fiscal year.

Part of the increase in expenditures can be attributed to the \$585,909 in matching funds required for both park grants combined.

Another major cost bump is employee health insurance which will increase by approximately \$244,000 in 2024-25

The city is also participating in a historical preservation grant with the county for the Clay-Kenner House which will cost the city approximately \$64,000 in matching funds.

City employees received a 3% pay increase across the board which will increase expenses by approximately \$75,000.

The city's four department heads, City Recorder Glenn Hutchens, Public Safety Director Travis Fields, Public Works director Mark Worley, and Parks Director Matthew Elkins also received a raise in addition to the 3% employee raises. The overall cost of those department head raises combined is \$28,000.

Aside from the park projects, the only other major capital outlay project budgeted is street paving at \$300,000. The BMA has not yet determined which streets will be paved.

As far as general fund revenue there was \$8,049,105 budgeted for 2024-25 not including the extra \$436,000 from the 35 cent property tax increase if it is approved. That's well above the \$6,376,289 in revenue budgeted the current fiscal year.

As with expenditures, much of that revenue bump can be attributed to the two parks grants. Sale tax is also projected to increase by about \$400,000.

The Rogersville general fund currently has an undesignated fund balance of \$2.7 million. If the property tax increase is approved the reserve fund is projected to grow to approximately \$3 million by the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year.