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media release

TVO WEBSITE HELPS BOOST ONTARIO'S POLITICAL LITERACY

Civics 101 at tvo.org launches May 19 2009

Toronto, May 19, 2009 – Do you know what a party whip does or what goes on at a committee hearing? And how does a bill become a law? For all but the keenest political junkies, how our provincial parliamentary democracy works can be mystifying. Civics 101, which launches today in beta, is a new TVO online resource designed to help boost the political literacy of every citizen in Ontario.

"Whether you're a newcomer to Canada, someone already working in public policy decision making, or anyone with an interest in the political process, Civics 101 offers an engaging and fun way to learn about the workings of our provincial government and how it impacts our everyday lives," says TVO's chief executive officer Lisa de Wilde. "We predict it will even get some Grade 10 civics students excited!"

Visit tvo.org/civics101 to find a suite of multimedia resources:

- **Civics Explained**, animations that, in the spirit of *Schoolhouse Rock!*, describe some of the fundamental concepts of government, such as how a budget is created, how Ontario's first past the post electoral system works and the difference between majority and minority governments. You may find yourself laughing out loud!
- an interactive **glossary** of terms to broaden understanding of our electoral system, how legislative proceedings unfold and the roles of MPPs and key government staff.
- video interviews from *The Agenda with Steve Paikin* with politicians, policy makers, authors and advocates.
- the interactive **Ask an MPP**, featuring video clips of MPPs answering questions about what they do and how they do it. Anyone can submit a video question via cell phone or webcam.
- for the first time anywhere, a current video archive of **Question Period** along with downloadable transcripts, providing a convenient research and reference tool for past policy discussions and debates in the Ontario legislature.

TVO's Civics 101 was developed in partnership with a group of organizations and individuals whose expertise has helped to form the content. Among them are the Maytree Foundation, a private Canadian charitable foundation committed to reducing poverty and inequality in Canada and to building strong civic communities; Settlement.org, an award-winning website that provides newcomers with settlement information and resources; and Jonathan Rose, associate professor of political studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

"We strongly believe that all residents should have a role in government decision-making – not only at election time but on a day-to-day basis," says Alejandra Bravo, Leadership and Learning manager at the Maytree Foundation. "This can only happen if citizens are well-informed and understand how government processes work."

About TVO

TVO is Ontario's public educational media organization and a trusted source of interactive educational content that informs, inspires and stimulates curiosity and thought. TVO's vision is to empower people to be engaged citizens of Ontario through educational media. For more information, visit tvo.org.

Where to find TVO

Cable channel 2 (channel may vary in some areas), Bell TV channel 265, Star Choice channel 353.

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