



# Changes and Choices

Age range: 10 to 15 (junior/intermediate)

Time: 90 to 150 minutes

Subjects: Geography, Science, Civics, Drama

Resources: Department of Highways letter, role cards, background information (*on following pages*).

## Learning Outcomes

Using role play, students will come to understand the complex set of positive and negative impacts involved in developing versus preserving forest and water habitats.

## Hook: Persuasion



The students are asked to find a partner. Have each attempt to convince the other to change their mind about their favourite rock band, type of music, make of snowmobile. Students can use appropriate verbal persuasion techniques such as flattery, bribery, whining, nagging, trickery, or even soft yelling; no touching. Each student has three minutes, then switches roles. Discuss the various persuasion techniques:

What works best?

What didn't work at all?

To which type of persuasion are you more likely to pay attention?

Have students form another partnership. One student stands before a seated partner and tries to convince him/her to give up their chair. Each student has three minutes, then switches roles. Again, discuss the different points of view and persuasion techniques

Alternatively, use the Hook from Lesson Three (*see page 17*).

## Procedure

Students will absorb scenario information and defend the perspective of a given role. See the Extensions (*on page 20*) for additional activities.

## Scenario

Students imagine they are neighbours living in a small community called Ourtown, in a river valley in the Greenplace Forest. The forest stretches along the Oftenflow River and up the valley walls. A few houses are located on the side of the valley but most are in town. The townsfolk enjoy skiing and hiking in the forest and wetlands, and fishing in the river. A number of businesses, including the furniture maker, riding academy and private lumber company also rely on the forest's resources.

The town council has just received a letter from the provincial/territorial government informing them of a proposed highway development that will impact the townsfolk – both positively and negatively.

*Note:* It is important that before, during and after this role-play activity, students understand the complexity of balancing the positive and negative socio-economic impacts of such a development. Students should also be told that a conclusion of either "No highway is good" or "A highway is good" is both simplistic and inaccurate. Also, sometimes it is appropriate for a community, province/territory or country to keep things as they are, while at other times change is necessary.

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**1** **Explain the scenario**, read the Department of Highways letter and discuss the complexities of decision-making as above. Distribute role cards as outlined below, giving either one or two roles to each student, as class size dictates. As well, all students should receive a *Rules of Discussion* card.

**Supportive** of the highway, but also may have some objections:

1. Commuter
2. Road Worker
3. Forest Worker
4. Land Developer
5. Department of Highways Official
6. Gas Station Owner
7. Drive-thru Restaurant Owner

**Mostly against** the highway, but may also see some benefits:

8. Local Homeowner
9. Artist
10. Biologist
11. Small Fish Farm Owner
12. Riding Academy Trainer
13. Local Cabinet Maker
14. Ecotourism Operator

**Neutral**

15. Environmental Assessment Chairperson

**2** **Students use role cards and their own ideas** to create a thorough argument that expresses personal points of view and gives the reasons why. They must look at themselves in terms of their jobs and/or industries, but also as private citizens who may need to look out for family members such as children, and/or older relatives who may need the new highway as an accessibility resource.

**3** **Assign older students a personality but ask them to create** their own role description reflecting reasons for or against the project and a list of questions they would like to ask others at the meeting.

**4** **Have students rehearse their role presentations with a buddy.** They can incorporate techniques of persuasion (see *Hook on page 19*). The Environmental Assessment Chairperson team or individual reviews the Rules of Discussion and rehearses procedures. Move class desks into a circle.

**5** **Ask students to present their viewpoints during a town meeting.**



### Extensions

The Chairperson holds a vote at the end of the meeting.

Students conduct self and peer assessments of role-play performance.

Students attend another meeting, this time assuming that the highway development has been approved. The focus must shift to exploring how it could be built in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on the community as a whole.

Students write letters to the Department of Highways, explaining the perspectives of all people who are on their side – pro or con.

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## Background Information

- The Oftenflow Valley is part of a migration corridor for birds.
- Its river, the Oftenflow, provides habitat for several varieties of fish.
- Greenplace Forest is a source of food and habitat for wildlife.
- The forest, wildlife and fish are the community's economic and recreational base.
- Oftenflow River provides the community's water source.
- Forests and wetlands border the riverbank.
- The river valley walls are thick with stands of cedar, oak and pine; several log homes are located here.
- Ourtown lies on the bottomlands or floodplain tucked away in Greenplace Forest and east of the Oftenflow River.
- Ourtown is a small community with twelve east-west streets and ten north-south streets. People moving west during a land rush settled it about 150 years ago.
- A small two-lane road connects Ourtown to Big City and Upnorth.
- Big City and Upnorth are also located along the river.
- Big City has shown the most growth, and now has a population of 1 million people (potential customers).

## Letter to the Council of Ourtown From the Department of Highways

Re: Notice of Application #448  
Construction of a Four-Lane Highway in the Oftenflow Valley

Dear Mayor and Council,

On January third of this year, the city of Big City submitted an application for the construction of a new four-lane highway along the forested lands that border the eastern boundary of the Oftenflow River. This highway will extend from Big City to Upnorth, with a bypass connecting to the west side of Ourtown.

Approval of the new four-lane highway will require clearing a 100-metre wide stretch of land through the Greenplace Forest.

We are beginning our study to explore this matter and are accepting input from potential stakeholders. Comments or opinions must be submitted to us in writing within thirty days.

Sincerely,

*I. M. Interested*

I. M. Interested  
Clerk  
Department of Highways

### **Commuter**

1

You live in town but you work in Upnorth. It takes you an hour to get to work each day. The new highway will mean that you can get to work ten minutes sooner.

**Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections.**

### **Road Worker**

2

You live in town and have been out of work for a long time. You would love to have work again.

**Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections.**

### **Forest Worker**

3

You live in town and realize that the highway will reduce the amount of forest, but you also know that in order to construct the highway the lumber company is going to hire loggers, and you'll most likely be one of them.

**Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections.**

### **Land Developer**

4

You live in town and have been waiting for a new road to open so that more people will want to live here, allowing you to build a new housing development.

**Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections**

### **Department of Highways Official**

5

You live in town and are concerned about how the highway development will affect drinking water quality. The highway will reduce the amount of forest, this means less natural filtering of rain and meltwater.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### **Gas Station Owner**

6

You live in town and run your own gas station adjacent to the new highway development. The highway will be great for business.

**Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections.**

### **Drive-thru Restaurant Owner**

7

You live in town and own a drive-thru restaurant in Big City. The highway project will provide you with a good location for another restaurant close to a ready supply of potential teenage employees. More business will increase your profits.

**Perspective: Supportive of highway, but may also have objections.**

### **Local Homeowner**

8

You like the view from your house, and enjoy the peace and quiet. The highway will spoil the view, add noise and pollution, reduce the amount of forest and could negatively affect watersheds.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**



### Artist

9

You go into the valley and paint the scenery. You have sold many of your paintings to people in the city. The highway means damage and reduction of the forest and stream habitats for many living things – and your business.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### Biologist

10

You live in town and worry about destruction of the forest, that local water will not be filtered as much and salt runoff from the highway will go into the streams and river. You are also concerned about diminished biodiversity.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### Small Fish Farm Owner

11

You live in town but own a small trout farm on a nearby lake, downstream of the river. You feel the reduction of the forest will mean less water filtering, and that highway salt run-off will flow into the streams and river.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### Riding Academy Owner

12

You live outside of town and take local citizens and tourists into the valley and forest on horseback. The highway will mean more noise, dust and pollution, and the scenery will also be diminished to some extent. This will harm your business.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### Local Cabinetmaker

13

You live in town and make beautiful cabinets from local wood. The highway will reduce the amount of forest from where you can harvest wood. The image of your furniture coming from an unspoiled wilderness area will be lost.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### Ecotourism Operator

14

You live in town and use the forest as the ideal place to take your customers for viewing and photographing creatures in their natural habitat. The highway will destroy much of this habitat.

**Perspective: Against the highway, but may also see benefits.**

### Environmental Assessment Chairperson

15

You are running the meeting and must ensure that all people follow the rules of discussion.

**Perspective: Neutral**

### Rules of Discussion

Chair welcomes everyone and outlines reason for the meeting.

Chair advises team members that each must speak for at least one minute, presenting their points of view.

Speakers indicate that they would like to speak by raising their hands.

If more than one speaker raises their hand, the Chair will call their names in the order in which they will speak.

Class cannot interrupt while someone is speaking.

Speakers must stand to address the group.

Chair calls time at the end of one minute and thanks the speaker.

Chair asks for the next speaker.

Chair calls an adjournment at the end of the meeting.

