

THE G20 SUMMIT: TALKS AND TEARGAS

Introduction

Focus

The summer of 2010 saw Toronto host a controversial gathering of the world's leaders. While the leaders met to discuss the world economy and key global initiatives, there was mayhem on the streets outside the heavily guarded conference centre. In this *News in Review* story we'll look at what was accomplished at the summit and at its bitter aftermath.

Definition

Black Bloc tactics are protest tactics where individuals wear black clothing, scarves, or ski masks to avoid being identified and to appear as one large mass.

It was an event that was supposed to shine the spotlight on Canada. And while the G20 did bring a great deal of attention to Toronto, a number of the images captured in the spotlight were negative ones. While diplomats brokered deals to try to save the world from another recession, protestors employed what are called “Black Bloc tactics” and went on a tear that shattered any hope of a peaceful summit.

Close to 100 protestors broke away from a larger, peaceful demonstration march and sprinted east toward Toronto's downtown core. The protestors attacked and started to destroy a police cruiser even though a police officer was sitting inside. Fellow officers moved in, got their colleague to safety, and then abandoned the car. The black-clad protestors set the cruiser on fire and then continued their violent rampage along King and Yonge streets.

The protestors ran wild for about 90 minutes, setting two more police cruisers on fire and shattering hundreds of windows along Yonge Street. By the end of the summit, property damage had stretched into hundreds of thousands of dollars, and more than 1 100 people had been arrested and detained. This

constituted the largest mass arrest in Canadian history.

The images of burning police cars and protestors dressed in black are the most vivid G20 memories for Canadians. Few had any concept of what happened just a few blocks away from the mayhem. Nestled comfortably behind a wall of 19 000 security personnel and a six-kilometre-long, three-metre-high chain-link fence, the leaders of the G20 nations agreed to a combination of stimulus spending and budget cutting to keep the world economy from dipping into another recession, or worse, crashing into a global depression. The Harper government declared the gathering an unmitigated success.

But Harper's declaration of success did little to comfort Canadians. Opposition critics claimed that the summit was unnecessary in light of another G20 gathering slated for the fall of 2010 in Seoul, South Korea. And average Canadians were flabbergasted by the close to \$1-billion spent on security for the summit. Clearly, the security price tag—while allowing police to protect the world's leaders—did little to save the downtown Toronto businesses that were trashed by marauding anarchists.

To Consider

The Black Bloc anarchists were protesting against what they believe are injustices inherent in the capitalist economic system. Although they destroyed storefronts and property within stores, they did not steal anything or hurt anyone. Do you think Black Bloc tactics are an effective way to protest? What do protests like these achieve? What harm do they cause?

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Video Review

Did you know . . .

There have been a number of mass arrests in Canadian history: The Toronto G20 (2010) – 1 090; the Clayoquot Sound logging blockades (1993) – 856; the October Crisis (1970) – 465; and the Quebec City Summit of the Americas (2001) – 463.

Quote

Black Bloc protest tactics have been around since the 1980s but became a mainstay at international summits after the anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999.

Pre-viewing Questions

Record your responses to the following questions before viewing the video.

1. Why do you think world leaders need to gather to discuss the economy?

2. Why do you think some people get very concerned when world leaders gather in a group?

3. In your opinion, are public protests an effective way of bringing about changes in society? Why?

4. Is there sometimes a need for violent protests? Why?

Viewing Questions

As you watch the video respond to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. What is the main purpose of the G8 and G20 summits?

2. Why did the security costs of the G8/20 summits skyrocket from the original price tag?

3. Why were G8 leaders meeting in Huntsville less vulnerable to security threats than those meeting for the G20 in Toronto?

4. How much did the security bill for the summit come to? How much did it cost per minute to police the 15 hours of meetings?

5. a) Identify two government expenses that led to claims that summit expenses were out of control.

b) Which expense gave opposition critics the most ammunition to attack the Harper government?

6. Name some of the security precautions the city of Toronto took in order to secure the summit.

7. a) What is the Muskoka Initiative?

b) Why were some people critical of the initiative?

8. Describe some of the damage done by roving protestors in Toronto.

9. How many people were arrested after Saturday's rampage on the streets of Toronto?

10. a) How successful were police in meeting their security goals?

b) In what ways did police fail in their efforts to keep the peace on summit weekend?

11. Of the 1 100 people arrested at the G20 Summit, how many eventually made their way to court? How many charges were settled or dismissed?

Post-viewing Activity

With a partner or in a small group complete the following.

1. It is interesting to note that the 5 000 people who marched peacefully prior to the Black Bloc rampage are virtually missing from the video. Why do you think the non-violent protestors—those speaking out against poverty, advocating for aboriginal rights, and promoting environmental awareness—were all but ignored by the media on summit weekend?

2. Consider these important G20 numbers:

Security personnel – 19 000

Black Bloc anarchists – around 100

Peaceful protestors – 5 000 to 10 000

Arrests – 1 100 (of those arrested 714 were released without charges; almost 300 were charged; and there were just under 100 formal criminal proceedings)

What insights can be drawn from these numbers?

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From the G8 to the G20

Did you know . . .

Canada has hosted three G7 summits and two G8 summits: Ottawa-Montebello (1981), Toronto (1988), Halifax (1995), Kananaskis (2002), and most recently in Muskoka (2010).

Pre-reading Activity

G20 is an acronym for Group of 20. The G20 Summit held in Toronto in 2010 was a meeting of the world's 20 leading industrialized nations. Before reading, work with a partner to try to come up with some reasons why it's a good idea for leading industrialized nations to meet face to face regarding the state of the global economy.

From G7 to G8

In June 2010, the G20 Summit was preceded by a one-day gathering of leaders in Huntsville, Ontario. In fact, you can't really speak about the G20 without first speaking about the G8.

Back in the 1970s, leaders from the world's strongest economies became concerned about the tenuous nature of global economic markets. This state of concern eventually gave way to distress when the energy crisis hit in the mid-1970s. As a result, in 1975, some heads of state got together to come up with a co-ordinated strategy to deal with the energy crisis. The following year Canada joined countries like Britain, France, Germany, and the United States in what came to be known as the G7. Initially, the G7 met on an annual basis to keep track of the global economy and to make sure that markets were kept from falling into another Great Depression. By the time Russia joined the group—transforming the gathering into the G8—the leaders of the world's top economies were also starting to focus on issues such

as international development, health, peace, and global security.

From G8 to G20

In 1999, a larger group of nations, the G20, began to meet to tackle problems relating to the global economy. The G20 put measures in place to promote international economic co-operation and stable trading relationships among member nations.

In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, the G20 became the pre-eminent meeting of world leaders to implement strategies dealing with the global economy. At a G20 meeting in Washington, just after the crisis hit, member nations pledged USD\$1.1-trillion in stimulus spending to keep the world markets afloat. Subsequent meetings in London and Pittsburgh saw a push for more accountability among member nations and, at the Toronto summit, a move toward a balance between cost cutting and stimulus spending.

Analysis

1. Is it necessary to have both a G8 and a G20? What benefits, if any, are there from having two separate organizations?
2. What role does the G20 play in the world today? Are the efforts of the G20 necessary to keep the global economy on track or can individual financial markets be trusted to govern the world economy?

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Plagued by Controversy

Definition

The word *redundant* means more than is needed, desired, or required.

Focus for Reading

The G20 meeting in Toronto in 2010 was plagued by controversy. Many Canadians were very concerned about the huge cost of hosting the event. While you read the following article, create and fill in a chart like the example below to help you come to terms with the nature of Canada's controversial G20 Summit.

Controversy description	Cause of the controversy	How the controversy might have been prevented

Controversy 1: A redundant meeting

The G20 saw its political stock rise after the global recession hit in 2008. With each G20 meeting, governments agreed to broader policy initiatives and set deadlines for member nations to demonstrate compliance. The next significant deadline was set last November in Pittsburgh, with G20 members agreeing to reveal their progress at the G20 meeting in Seoul, South Korea, in November 2010. Meanwhile the G8 was looking like a lost dog searching for home. With the economic agenda now in the hands of the G20, the G8 started to play a secondary role to the larger, more global group.

Here's where the first controversy surfaces: The original plan was for Canada to host the G8 in Huntsville, Ontario, at the prestigious Deerhurst Resort, located in Ontario's exclusive cottage region called Muskoka. The G20 wasn't scheduled to meet until the fall in Seoul. It appeared that the G8 meeting might turn into nothing more than a photo op of world's leaders with a fancy Muskoka backdrop. In an effort to lift Canada's global profile, Prime Minister

Stephen Harper decided to float an idea: since Canada was already hosting eight G20 leaders, why not invite the rest? He used the collapse of the Greek economy as a pretext to sell the need for a meeting to other G20 nations and got South Korean President Lee Myung-bak to agree that a Toronto G20 would not interfere with the more important meeting to be held in Seoul five months later. They would just squeeze everybody into Deerhurst Resort and everything would be fine.

The problem: with the size of the summit more than doubled, Deerhurst and the greater Huntsville region could not accommodate all the G20 delegates. Eventually the government decided to host the G8 in Huntsville and the G20 in Toronto. Moving to Toronto exposed world leaders to a host of security problems, which is why the cost of policing the summit rose to close to a billion dollars. Critics argue that the Harper government would have been wiser to wait for the meeting in Seoul rather than expose the taxpayers of Canada to the astounding costs of the G8/G20 summits.

Did you know . . .

Security costs for the 2010 G8/G20 summits in Ontario (\$930-million) were higher than for the entire 2010 Winter Olympics in British Columbia (\$899-million).

Definition

Kettling involves a large group of police that surround a group of protestors and pull those caught in their circle—whether innocent or guilty—into custody.

Controversy 2: Out-of-control costs

Three months before the G8/G20 summits the government indicated the two events would cost taxpayers around \$179-million. By June, the price tag had skyrocketed to \$1.2-billion, with close to a billion of that going to policing. An eight-kilometre fence was constructed around Deerhurst Resort, and a six-kilometre temporary fence encircled the area around the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The RCMP were given half a billion dollars to train their officers and bring them to Toronto to police the event. Scores of other police officers from across Canada were also trained and brought to the city. New weapons, like the multi-decibel sound cannon, were purchased by the Toronto Police Service. Security cameras were put up throughout the downtown core of Toronto.

And then there was the price tag for the summit itself. Beyond the cost of accommodations for the leaders and their entourages—the United States alone brought 600 people to the summits—millions of dollars were spent on the venues themselves. Huntsville, located just over six kilometres from Deerhurst Resort, got a multi-million-dollar facelift, despite the fact that the world leaders themselves spent no time in Huntsville during the G8.

The expense that may have captured the most negative publicity, though, was the construction of a fake lake in the Toronto media centre. Reporters from around the world were invited to sit around the indoor lake and film stand-ups and conduct interviews with a giant nature scene on a big screen as their

backdrop. Canoes and Muskoka chairs surrounded the artificial lake. The cost of the display was nearly \$2-million. Opposition critics went to town on the lake, naming it “Lake Woebegotten,” “Fuddle Duddle’s Puddle,” and “Accountability Bay.”

Controversy 3: Mass arrests

The G8 summit in Muskoka went off without a hitch, and authorities were hopeful that the G20 would be peaceful as well. However, if there was going to be a serious problem, it was going to be on Saturday afternoon. Police had learned that anarchists planned to piggyback on a labour rally occurring that day and storm the security fence. But rather than attack the fence, the anarchists shattered the windows of hundreds of businesses and destroyed a number of police cars.

Very few arrests were made prior to the rampage, but, in the wake of the assault on Toronto, police took 1 100 people into custody, making the G20 arrest tally the highest in Canadian history. Many of those arrested said they were just bystanders and that those who had done the damage had changed their clothes and disappeared anonymously into the crowd. Meanwhile the police resorted to a tactic called “kettling.” Kettling involves a large group of police that surround a group of protestors and pull those caught in their circle—whether innocent or guilty—into custody. In the end, out of the 1 100 arrested and detained at a temporary jail, fewer than 300 charges were actually laid and fewer than 100 charges resulted in court appearances.

Follow-up

1. Review your chart. Which controversy gives you most cause for concern?
2. Join a small group with other students who have identified the same controversy as the greatest cause for concern. While in your group, try to come up with at least three reasons why the controversy—and the way it was handled by the authorities—is unacceptable to Canadians.

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A View from Inside the Fence

Definition

From the perspective of government financing, *austerity* means cutting spending and possibly raising taxes to get the government's budget back on track.

In June 2010, the world's leaders attended two economic summits in Ontario: one in Huntsville and one in Toronto. For security reasons, an army of police was employed to protect the

leaders with a huge chain-link fence securing the perimeter of each venue. This section talks about what happened inside the fenced area.

Focus for Reading

Politicians from around the world argue that it is essential for leaders to meet face to face to iron out global policy issues. The G20 is designed to make sure the global economy stays on track and avoids slipping into recession or depression. Before reading this section, consider the following questions:

1. Why is it important for world leaders to meet face to face?
2. How would the meetings be different if the leaders met via video conference?
3. Do you think the expense of hosting a meeting of world leaders is justified?

Muskoka 2010 G8 Summit

Members of the G8 gathered at the Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville, Ontario, on June 25 and 26, 2010. Many people wondered what the G8 meeting would accomplish. Prime Minister Stephen Harper did his best to push the G8 agenda of international development, health, peace, and security by lobbying the G8 to back his Muskoka Initiative. The Muskoka Initiative aims to address the issue of maternal and child health in developing countries. G8 members pledged \$5-billion over five years to promote the health of mothers, newborns, and children. If implemented properly the initiative could save the lives of 1.3 million children under the age of five and over 60 000 mothers in developing nations.

Prior to the G8, critics went after Harper's government for its failure to include medical abortions as part of the Muskoka Initiative. Many believed that the exclusion of abortion procedures from the initiative demonstrated that Harper and his colleagues were not

serious about the health of mothers and children since medical abortions are necessary if women are to have true reproductive control. Nonetheless, the initiative got the endorsement of the G8, with Canada committing \$1-billion in funding. Behind the scenes, Harper was also able to raise an additional \$2-billion from several non-G8 nations as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Toronto 2010 G20 Summit

Once the G8 wrapped up its meeting in Muskoka, the leaders of the eight strongest world economies made their way south to join the rest of the G20 in Toronto. In Pittsburgh in 2009, the G20 was declared the pre-eminent forum for making decisions dealing with the global economy. This effectively took the economy off the G8 agenda and put it on the wider, more inclusive, and very powerful G20 agenda. In an effort to deal with the 2008 financial crisis, the G20 introduced a platform of multi-trillion-dollar spending to put the world economy back on its feet. It also set a

number of economic targets scheduled to come due in Seoul in the fall of 2010—which made many wonder about the relevance of the Toronto summit.

Nonetheless, Prime Minister Harper argued that the Toronto meeting was essential. He used the forum to formally shelve the idea of a bank tax put forward by members of the European Union. The bank tax proposal would have seen banks taxed by governments in order to create a reserve fund in the event of another economic crisis. Canada opposed the bank tax idea because Canadian banks didn't need government help during the crisis. The Harper government argued that Canadian banks were strong and robust because government regulations prevented banks from making high-risk investments. In other words, government regulations were a better way to get banks to behave responsibly than a bank tax. While the bank tax idea was not completely abandoned at the G20

meeting in Toronto, the initiative was put on hold.

The most important accomplishment of the Toronto G20 Summit was a general agreement on getting deficits under control by 2013. Going into the summit, countries like the United Kingdom and Germany were pushing for dramatic cuts to government spending. Their hope was to sway the G20 away from stimulus spending and toward austerity. Meanwhile countries like the United States argued that moving away from stimulus spending threatened to throw the global economy back into recession. In the end, the G20 agreed to a compromise that called for a gradual reduction in stimulus spending, with each G20 nation agreeing to cut its deficit in half by 2013. Measures were put in place to allow nations to report on their financial progress in order to demonstrate that G20 targets were being met.

Analysis

1. Consider the outcomes of the G8 and G20 summits. Do the initiatives put forward at each summit justify the need to meet on annual basis?
2. Do you feel the meetings are important for the average person living in the world today?
3. Provide three reasons that those on the inside might say the G8 and G20 summits were a success.

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A View from Outside the Fence

Did you know . . .
Black Bloc protestors are not affiliated with a particular group. They disagree with the way capitalism disenfranchises many people and they embrace a spirit of anarchy to do as much physical property damage as possible.

While G8 and G20 leaders held meetings behind a wall of security personnel and a three-metre-high fence, thousands of

protestors looked to have their voices heard. This section looks at what happened on the protestors' side of the fence.

Focus for Reading

In the end, there were more security personnel working the G20 than there were protestors. Before reading this section, consider the following questions:

1. Did the government of Canada need to employ an army of security personnel to police the G20 summit in 2010?
2. Was Toronto a good choice for the location for the summit? Why?
3. Given the security concerns of authorities, what alternative locations might have been selected to host the summit?

The G8 Summit

If the protests surrounding the G8 summit in Muskoka were any indication, the government's decision to spend close to a billion dollars on security may have been a waste. The official G8 protest zone lay empty while the leaders met at Deerhurst Resort. Things were so quiet in Huntsville that the media made a story out of a little boy, innocently playing in the protest zone, asking reporters for cookies. The only near security breach came from a few members of the Council of Canadians who tried to paddle canoes into Deerhurst but were quickly turned away. In Muskoka, it was as if they called a protest and nobody came.

The G20 Summit

The same could not be said for Toronto. Small protests percolated through the week preceding the G20. The first sign of friction came on Friday when police were forced to divert a group of protestors from a previously agreed upon route. The protestors weren't happy and they let the police know it.

Friday also represented the first time protestors used Black Bloc tactics. Black Bloc protestors cover their faces and dress from head to toe in black. In Toronto, the Black Bloc arrived dressed

in regular clothing while carrying backpacks with their black clothing and weapons like hammers and billiard balls inside. During a protest march banners were used to hide the Black Bloc protestors from police. When the banners came down, a small army of Black Bloc protestors emerged.

Friday seemed to be a dress rehearsal for Saturday. The Canadian Labour Congress had planned a mass rally called "People First" in the early afternoon of Saturday, June 26. Anarchists hoping to employ Black Bloc tactics decided to meld into that rally and then break away once the protest reached Spadina Avenue and Queen Street. Police anticipated this strategy after early indications suggested that as the protest moved west on Queen Street the anarchists would storm police lines and make their way to the security fence. Instead, the Black Bloc protestors sprinted east, away from the main march, staying well north of the fence. They smashed windows along the way.

The Rampage

What ensued was a 90-minute rampage that left three police cruisers in flames and hundreds of downtown-area businesses in shambles. The attack

combined the chaos of a riot with the organization of a military operation. Protestors would spring into action when leaders shouted out code words. Bloc members would sprint from the crowd, smash windows, and then disappear back into the crowd. Other bloc members would obstruct reporters and bystanders from taking pictures. When the bloc found a soft target—like a police car with only one officer in it or an empty police car—they pounced. Once they made their way north on Yonge Street, the Black Bloc knew they had thoroughly confused the police and were left to their own devices as they proceeded up the landmark avenue, shattering any storefront that they associated with the capitalist system.

The Police Response

By late afternoon, the police knew they had to do something. They had managed to hold the perimeter around the world's leaders but they had lost control of the city and decided they needed to assert themselves. For the next 24 hours they began arresting scores of people. Standoffs between police and protestors became frequent. Working on a tip that Black Bloc participants were sleeping in a gymnasium at the University of Toronto, police raided the site and arrested 70 people. Late Sunday afternoon, police used a tactic called kettling to hem in hundreds of protestors. Many of those caught in the police web were arrested.

Analysis

1. Why might it be argued that it was a bad idea to have the G20 summit meeting in downtown Toronto?
2. What could the police have done to prevent the Black Bloc from going on their rampage?
3. The damage done by the Black Bloc protestors was believed by some to justify the close to \$1-billion spent on summit security. Do you agree or disagree with this position?
4. In what way were "the voices of compassion" silenced the day Black Bloc tactics were used in Toronto?

The arrests were complicated by the fact that the Black Bloc protestors had changed into regular street clothes after the violent rampage, discarding their black clothes on the street.

By the end of the day Sunday, 1 100 people had been arrested—the largest mass arrest in Canadian history. Of that number, close to 800 were released without charges, and 300 were charged with more serious offenses—suggesting that most people were wrongfully detained in the first place.

In the aftermath of the G20, more protests occurred, mostly relating to the heavy-handed tactics employed by police. Calls for public inquiries into police conduct rang out across the city. Protestors initiated class-action lawsuits against the authorities and, in late August, the number of charges against protestors was trimmed down to around 100 after a mass court appearance by the 300 accused. Meanwhile the police put out "wanted" posters showing the faces of those they felt behaved recklessly and violently during the protests.

Probably the greatest victims of the G20 were the legitimate, non-violent protestors who came to Toronto to advocate for social justice causes like ending poverty, aboriginal rights, and environmental awareness. Their voices of compassion and concern were silenced by the adversarial clash between anarchists dressed in black and those dressed in police uniforms.

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Activity: The Right to Protest

Clashes between the police and protestors at the G20 Summit caused many people to consider various issues about the right to protest in a democracy.

- If citizens can be arrested en masse while demonstrating, do Canadians really have the right to protest?
- If the authorities deliberately blocked legitimate protestors because of the actions of a few anarchists, then do the police have too much power?
- If the state can spend millions of dollars on security to protect world leaders while many Canadians live in poverty, how fair and democratic is the country?
- If the police have to stand by and watch protestors destroy private property because of the right to protest in the country, then why do we allow people the right to protest?
- If people really want to change the capitalist economic system or bring attention to social injustice, are there other ways to bring about change that are more effective than public protests?

Your Task

With a partner, select one of the following tasks and complete the activity that follows.

Task 1: Fundamental Freedoms in Canada

The right to protest is associated with the Fundamental Freedoms section of the Canadian Charter of Rights. Here they are:

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- d) freedom of association.

To Consider

How far does the right to peacefully assemble go? For example, would protestors have a right to proceed inside the security zone and stage a mass sit-in at the G20 security fence? Work with your partner to try to determine the line where peaceful assembly begins and ends.

Task 2: Legal Rights in Canada

In the aftermath of the G20, many people claimed that, not only were their fundamental freedoms violated, but their legal rights were also ignored. The Charter section dealing with legal rights reads:

Life, liberty and security of person

7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

Search or seizure

8. Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure.

Detention or imprisonment

9. Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.

Arrest or detention

10. Everyone has the right on arrest or detention
 - a) to be informed promptly of the reasons therefore;
 - b) to retain and instruct counsel without delay and to be informed of that right; and
 - c) to have the validity of the detention determined by way of *habeas corpus* and to be released if the detention is not lawful.

To Consider

Based on your research into the G20 protest, were the Charter rights of some protestors violated? Work with your partner to find specific Charter violations that occurred during the G20 protest.

You can find an annotated copy of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms at the Canadian Heritage site: www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/canada/guide/index-eng.cfm.

Other Resources

- Use the articles in this *News in Review* story to help you complete the activity.
- Use various Internet sources—including videos—to provide you with further information regarding the G20 protests. (Search words: G20, Toronto, protests, Black Bloc)

Final Activity

Work with your partner to prepare a proposal demonstrating how G20 protestors were essentially stripped of their right to protest during the summits.

OR

Work with your partner to prepare a proposal demonstrating how G20 protestors acted recklessly and forfeited their right to protest during the summits.

Be prepared to present your proposal to your classmates.

Proposal format: minimum 15 point-form notes