Newfoundland Joins The Federation:

Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent was part of the negotiations that resulted in Newfoundland joining Canada. The process of expanding Canada from sea to sea had been set in motion by Prime Minister King at the end of The Second World War. Until 1932, Newfoundland had been an independent, self-governing dominion within the British Empire. During the Depression, however, the island had suffered so badly that its government had gone bankrupt. Democracy was temporarily suspended and Britain set up a special commission to govern Newfoundland.

In 1948, islanders were given the opportunity to vote on their political future in a referendum. They were offered three options: to continue to be governed by a special commission, to be a self-governing dominion within The British Empire, or to join Canada. J.R. “Joey” Smallwood, a skilful Newfoundland politician, argued that union with Canada would bring modernization to the province. Yet, many Newfoundlanders believed that the benefits could not make up for the higher taxes and loss of identity that Confederation would bring. Some preferred economic union with the United States.

In a referendum in June 1948, only 41 per cent of Newfoundlanders favoured Confederation. A larger number, 44.6 per cent, voted in favour of returning to the self-governing dominion status, while 14 per cent preferred governing by commission. As no option won a clear majority, another vote was scheduled for late July. This time, the commission option was dropped, and the Confederation option won 52 per cent of the vote.

The Terms of Union were negotiated with the federal government under Prime Minister St. Laurent, and on March 31st, 1949, Newfoundland became part of Canada. That same time, Joey Smallwood was elected premier of the new province, a job he held for more than two decades.

Analysis Question:

1. Only 52 per cent of Newfoundlanders voted to join Canada. Do you think this was enough of a margin to warrant such a huge political change? Should it have been necessary for a greater percentage to support the change? Give three reasons for your answer.
2. Watch the short video clip [“Going Down The Road”](http://www.tvdsb.ca/webpages/mckeownw/files/going%20down%20the%20road.mp4). After watching this video, offer two paragraphs, one that argues that Confederation was a positive change for Newfoundlanders, and one that argues that it was a negative change.