

# **The Electoral System of Canada**

**3rd Edition**

This document was last updated in 2011. It remains online for reference and research purposes. A revised version will be posted later in 2015.



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## Foreword

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Canada's electoral system is the outcome of a process – spanning more than 140 years since Confederation – through which Canadians have progressively overcome exclusions from the franchise and barriers to voting to achieve the universal, constitutionally guaranteed right to vote and to be a candidate in a legislative election.

At federal election time, public attention tends naturally to focus on the excitement of the political campaigns, taking for granted the administrative machinery that surrounds and supports voting. But in addition to voters lists and polling stations, there are many measures in place to ensure access to the ballot and help safeguard the right to vote – such as multilingual election information, website accessibility, level access at polling stations, mobile polls, special ballots and advance polls.

*The Electoral System of Canada* explains how this administrative machinery works at the federal level. It begins by taking a look at Canada's parliamentary system and describes the electoral process, including what happens behind the scenes at Elections Canada, its role and activities. This book also outlines the main characteristics of by-elections and referendums, describes how electoral boundaries are redrawn and summarizes the regulatory framework for political financing.

The aim of Elections Canada is to support the informed participation of every citizen in our country's democratic process. Our three strategic objectives of trust, accessibility and engagement were established to ensure that Canadians can continue to have confidence in their electoral process and participate actively in the selection of their representatives, thereby contributing to the overall health of Canadian democracy.

Elections Canada is committed to identifying and removing barriers to this participation. We need to foster the engagement of Canadians and their representatives in our efforts to make the electoral process more responsive to their needs and expectations. The exercise of the right to vote, which is enshrined in law, would be meaningless if it did not seek to express the informed will of the people.

Marc Mayrand  
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

[DATE]



# The Political System

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*What is the foundation of Canada's political system?*

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## The Basics

Canada's political system is based on that of the United Kingdom. It is a constitutional monarchy, composed of the Queen of Canada, who is officially represented by the Governor General (or by a lieutenant-governor at the provincial level), the Senate and the House of Commons.

There are 105 seats in the Senate, whose members are appointed by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. The House of Commons has 308 seats, held by members elected by citizens who vote in general elections or by-elections. The Government originates in the elected House of Commons. According to the principle of constitutional monarchy, therefore, the Queen rules but does not govern.

The Canadian Constitution is a mixture of unwritten conventions, written Acts and judicial decisions that together form the political system. It defines the jurisdiction and powers of the federal, provincial and territorial governments, each of which is responsible for the administration of its own elections.

### Overcoming Canada's Geography

Canada's electoral system has evolved in response to the country's geography. Our population, though not large in global terms, is spread over an immense land mass spanning six time zones. As a result, some electoral districts are huge and sparsely populated. Nunavut, for example, sprawls over 2,093,190 square kilometres and comprised 31,906 people in the 2011 Census. In sharp contrast, the smallest electoral district of Papineau, in Quebec, occupies only 9 square kilometres with a population of 100,396.

The Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982 set the maximum time between federal general elections at five years, except in time of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection. As well, the *Canada Elections Act* specifies that a general election must be held on the third Monday in October in the fourth calendar year following the previous general election. However, it also allows for an election to be called earlier. This may take place if the Governor General accepts the Prime Minister's advice to dissolve Parliament. It may also occur if the Governor General accepts the resignation of the Prime Minister after the Government has been defeated on a motion of confidence in the House and the Governor General does not ask the leader of another party to become Prime Minister and form a government.

After an election, the party with the largest number of elected representatives will normally form the Government, and its leader is the Prime Minister. It must be able at all times to maintain the confidence of the House in order to remain in power. The leader of the party with the second-largest number of elected representatives is usually the leader of the official Opposition. If the

party with the largest number of seats does not have a simple majority of seats (50 percent plus one), it may govern with the support of one or more other parties.

The Prime Minister chooses people (usually members of the House of Commons of his or her party) to serve as the Cabinet ministers heading various government departments. The Prime Minister can also appoint senators and others to Cabinet.

Appendix 3 provides details about Canadian parliaments and federal elections since Confederation.

## Representation in the House of Commons

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*What role does geography play in democratic representation?*

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Representation in the House of Commons is based on geographical divisions called electoral districts, also known as ridings. At the federal level, the number of electoral districts is established through rules (the “representation formula”) set out in the *Constitution Act, 1867*. There are currently 308 electoral districts, each with a corresponding seat in the House of Commons. That was the number of members elected in the 2011 general election.

Since 1964, independent commissions have been entrusted with adjusting electoral district boundaries based on population changes identified in every 10-year census. According to the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, the commissions (one for each province) must also consider communities of interest or of identity, historical patterns and the geographic size of electoral districts. The process of readjusting the boundaries is commonly called redistribution.

The three-member electoral boundaries commissions are usually chaired by a judge, chosen by the chief justice of the province. The two other members are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Commissions are not required for Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut since each territory is a single electoral district.

Elections Canada provides the commissions with technical, administrative and financial support to help them carry out their responsibilities. Each commission publishes its proposal, holds hearings where members of the public and parliamentarians can provide their input, then issues a report to the House of Commons. If members of the House of Commons file objections to the report, the commission may opt to make adjustments. All final decisions about the new electoral boundaries are made by the commissions and published in the *Canada Gazette* as a representation order.

The redistribution process can take about two years to complete. The new boundaries and names are used at the first general election called at least seven months after the representation order is proclaimed.

In 2011, Parliament adopted the *Fair Representation Act*. On top of shortening the time frame for the redistribution process, its primary effect was to change the representation formula. Provinces that had become under-represented relative to their share of the population would gain seats in the 2013 redistribution. As a result, Ontario gained 15 seats, British Columbia and Alberta each received six more, while Quebec grew by three seats. The total number of electoral districts and corresponding seats will be 338 for the general election expected in 2015.

Appendix 2 shows the changes in the number of seats in the House of Commons since 1867.

## First Past the Post

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*How are candidates elected to Parliament?*

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Canada's electoral system is referred to as a "single-member plurality" system (also commonly called a "first-past-the-post" system). In every electoral district, the candidate with the highest number of votes wins a seat in the House of Commons and represents that electoral district as its member of Parliament. An absolute majority (more than 50 percent of the votes in the electoral district) is not required for a candidate to be elected.

Any number of candidates can run for election in an electoral district, but a candidate can run in only one riding, either independently or under the banner of a registered political party. Similarly, each party can endorse only one candidate in an electoral district. In the 41st general election, held on May 2, 2011, the number of candidates per electoral district ranged from 3 to 9, with an average of 5.

Candidates who are endorsed by a registered political party can have the name of that party appear under their name on the ballot. Those who run for election without a party affiliation can choose to have either "Independent" or no affiliation appear under their name on the ballot. In the most recent election, less than four percent of candidates ran without a party affiliation.

### Political Parties Registered Under the *Canada Elections Act* in the 41st General Election

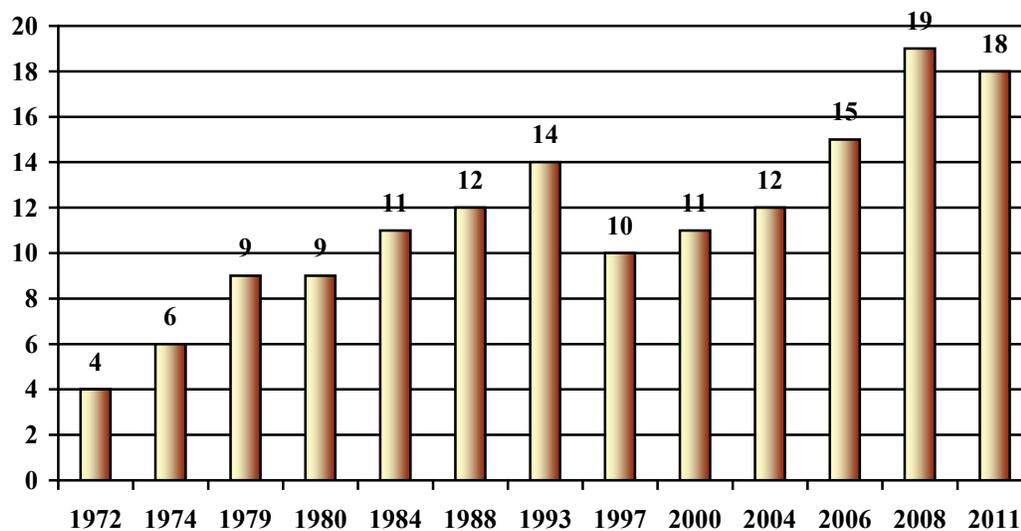
1. Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada
2. Bloc Québécois
3. Canadian Action Party
4. Christian Heritage Party of Canada
5. Communist Party of Canada
6. Conservative Party of Canada
7. First Peoples National Party of Canada
8. Green Party of Canada
9. Liberal Party of Canada
10. Libertarian Party of Canada
11. Marijuana Party
12. Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada
13. New Democratic Party
14. Pirate Party of Canada
15. Progressive Canadian Party
16. Rhinoceros Party
17. United Party of Canada
18. Western Block Party

Because the registration status of political parties can change, Elections Canada maintains an up-to-date list on its website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

The *Canada Elections Act* defines a political party as an organization that has as one of its fundamental purposes participating in public affairs by endorsing one or more of its members as candidates and supporting their election to the House of Commons. Political parties that meet this definition can register with the Chief Electoral Officer to gain official status and become eligible to obtain certain monetary and other benefits under the Act. The financial benefits of registration are outlined in the chapter on political financing. There are non-financial advantages as well – for example, political parties that successfully apply for registration at least 60 days before the issue of the election writs can have their name appear on the ballot under the names of the candidates they endorse.

In the 2011 general election, there were 18 registered political parties, one fewer than in the previous campaign in 2008. The graph below shows the evolving number of registered political parties since the 29th general election in 1972, the first held under the registration system for political parties.

**Number of Registered Political Parties  
in General Elections, 1972 to 2011**



# Pillars of Electoral Democracy

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*What are the main characteristics of Canada's electoral democracy?*

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Democracy does not implement itself, nor does it remain strong and healthy without underlying values and a firm will to apply and enforce them. Democracy is much more than holding elections; however, free and fair elections are one of its fundamental conditions.

Over time, Canadians have come to trust the outcome of elections as truly reflecting their collective will without political interference. Political parties and candidates in the political arena have also learned that they can have confidence in the fairness of the electoral process. Together, these conditions contribute to a meaningful and peaceful environment for elections, and a lively and long-lasting democracy.

## **Participation, Fairness and Transparency**

Throughout the evolution of the Canadian electoral system, legislators have worked to bring about increased accessibility, fairness and transparency to ensure the prevalence of democratic values.

Candidates, nomination contestants (those competing for endorsement as a party's candidate in an electoral district), leadership contestants, political parties, electoral district associations and third parties (persons or groups who are not candidates, registered parties or electoral district associations) are all subject to strict controls. These begin with an obligation for political parties, electoral district associations, leadership contestants and third parties to register, thereby gaining official status and some associated benefits. All political entities must comply with administrative and legal requirements and must report their revenues, expenses and liabilities to the Chief Electoral Officer, who makes this information available to the public.

Limits on contributions and expenses exist mainly to ensure transparency and fairness and to reduce the possibility of undue influence. By avoiding a spiral of escalating election spending, legislators have made elections more equitable and accessible for less wealthy candidates who wish to enter the competition. It is believed that a level playing field attracts more participants, diversifies political discourse and increases overall participation, including attendance at the polls.

Over time, various court challenges and judicial decisions related to election expenses limits, particularly those imposed on third parties, have shown that striking a balance between the values of liberty and equality is a delicate process. While some measures governing electoral participants may be perceived as restricting their freedom of expression or association, it is widely accepted that these legislative provisions contribute to the proper functioning of a democratic society.

In the context of democratic elections, participation includes broader forms of involvement, such as volunteering at any level of the political process and contributing funds to political entities. Since 1974, the law has provided an incentive in the form of tax credits to Canadians who decide to make a financial contribution to candidates and registered political parties. This incentive was extended in 2004 to contributions made to registered electoral district associations.

## **Secrecy and Privacy**

Voting in Canada is by secret ballot. The security of the ballot is paramount, and the system makes it impossible to discover for which candidate a specific voter has voted. Furthermore, a ballot cast with a mark that could potentially allow the voter to be identified has to be rejected. This is to ensure that no electors are intimidated or bribed into voting in a particular way. Intimidation and bribery, as well as any attempt to reveal how an elector has voted or is going to vote, is an offence under the *Canada Elections Act*.

The privacy of electors is also very important to Elections Canada, and it is enforced in all aspects of electoral administration. For example, to enforce the right to privacy, the use of personal information obtained for electoral purposes is strictly regulated. The law imposes controls on who can obtain this information and how it can be used, and it sets out penalties for non-compliance.

## **Adaptability**

The success of the Canadian electoral system is in part a result of its ability to adapt to changing social circumstances. Canada's electoral laws will continue to evolve as Parliament responds to judicial decisions and expanding public expectations and takes advantage of new technologies. Canada's electoral system is a reflection of Canadians' continued concern for fairness and democracy as well as Elections Canada's ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence in delivering federal electoral events.

# Elections Canada

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*What is Elections Canada, and how does it work?*

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## **Role, Mission and Goals**

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, also called Elections Canada, is an independent agency set up by Parliament to administer all aspects of federal general elections, by-elections and referendums. The mission of Elections Canada is to ensure that Canadians can exercise their democratic right to vote and be a candidate.

Elections Canada's fundamental goals are to be ready to deliver electoral events whenever they may be called, continually improve election delivery and carry out ongoing responsibilities with respect to political financing.

Originally, the Chief Electoral Officer was responsible only for the administration of federal general elections and by-elections. Under the laws that govern federal electoral matters, this mandate has broadened to include the administration of national referendums on constitutional matters and other important aspects of Canada's democratic system, such as overseeing political financing and providing assistance in the redistribution of electoral boundaries. The Chief Electoral Officer's current responsibilities include:

- making sure that all electors have access to the electoral process through public education and information programs as well as accessible physical facilities
- maintaining the National Register of Electors
- providing legal, technical, financial and administrative support to the independent commissions that periodically readjust electoral district boundaries
- registering political parties, their electoral district associations, party leadership contestants and third parties
- administering the legislated controls on the financing sources and election expenses of candidates, nomination contestants, party leadership contestants, registered parties, registered electoral district associations and third parties engaged in election advertising, and examining and disclosing their financial reports, including posting them on the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)
- authorizing the payment of allowances to registered parties and reimbursing the election expenses of candidates and parties according to formulas set out in the *Canada Elections Act*

- appointing and training returning officers and ensuring that they provide competent and efficient services in administering the electoral process in each electoral district
- appointing the Commissioner of Canada Elections, who is tasked with enforcing electoral legislation
- appointing the Broadcasting Arbitrator, who is tasked with allocating broadcasting time among registered political parties during general elections

In addition to administering the *Canada Elections Act*, the specific laws under which Elections Canada operates are the *Referendum Act* and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*. The agency is also subject to all laws that generally apply to federal organizations, including the *Constitution Act, 1867*; the *Constitution Act, 1982* (which includes the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*); the *Financial Administration Act*; the *Public Service Employment Act*; the *Privacy Act*; the *Access to Information Act*; the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Official Languages Act*.

At present, Elections Canada consists of a core staff of almost 400 employees at its offices in Ottawa, but this number expands significantly during a general election. The core staff must be highly qualified to provide a high degree of readiness for an election and oversee the hundreds of tasks that have to be carried out according to a strict timetable during electoral events.

## **Non-partisan and Independent**

A non-partisan electoral management body is the key to an impartial electoral process. Several factors contribute to the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer, including Elections Canada's arm's-length relationship with the government and the budgetary mechanisms that fund its work. (These are outlined in greater detail later in this section.) The Chief Electoral Officer reports directly to Parliament and is thus completely independent of the Government and political parties.

Running an election involves a large number of election officers – from returning officers, who are responsible for administering an election in each electoral district, to deputy returning officers and poll clerks, who help voters at every ballot box. The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for ensuring that election officers are politically neutral and non-partisan in all aspects of their work.

Special precautions are taken to ensure that no political bias affects the administration of elections. All election workers must take an oath to uphold voters' rights and the secrecy of the vote and to perform their duties without favouritism. Given the impartial and politically sensitive nature of his office, the Chief Electoral Officer is the only Canadian citizen of voting age not allowed to vote in federal elections.

## **Appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer**

The position of Chief Electoral Officer of Canada was created in 1920 in an effort to streamline and standardize the administration of federal elections. The Chief Electoral Officer is appointed by a resolution of the House of Commons. This procedure allows all parties represented in the House of Commons to participate in the selection process, thereby adding to the independence of the position. Six people have held this position since its inception:

- Oliver Mowat Biggar (1920–1927)
- Jules Castonguay (1927–1949)
- Nelson Jules Castonguay (1949–1966)
- Jean-Marc Hamel (1966–1990)
- Jean-Pierre Kingsley (1990–2007)
- Marc Mayrand (2007–present)

Once appointed, the Chief Electoral Officer may be removed from office only for cause, by the Governor General, following a joint address of the House of Commons and the Senate. The Chief Electoral Officer may serve until the age of 65.

## **Funding**

As an independent agency, Elections Canada is funded by an annual appropriation, which covers the salaries of permanent full-time employees, and by a statutory authority contained in the *Canada Elections Act*, the *Referendum Act* and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, which draws on the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The statutory authority covers all other expenditures, including the cost of preparing and conducting electoral events, maintaining the National Register of Electors, quarterly allowances to qualifying political parties, redistribution of electoral boundaries and continuing public information and education programs. The salary of the Chief Electoral Officer and contributions to employee benefit plans are also statutory items.

The statutory authority serves to recognize Elections Canada's independence from the Government and from the influence of political parties. It is a critical component in maintaining the integrity of the democratic process.

## **The Commissioner of Canada Elections**

Appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commissioner of Canada Elections receives complaints and allegations of wrongdoing under the *Canada Elections Act* and *Referendum Act*, determines whether there is a basis for each allegation and may order an investigation. Complaints typically concern offences such as failures by employers to grant their employees the required time off to vote, improper reporting of financial information and violations of advertising rules.

If the Commissioner believes on reasonable grounds that an offence has been committed, the Commissioner may refer the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who decides whether to prosecute. The Director conducts prosecutions on behalf of the Crown for any offences under the *Canada Elections Act* or *Referendum Act* as well as any related appeals or other proceedings. No one other than the Director of Public Prosecutions may institute a prosecution for an offence under the Act without the Director's prior written consent.

A prosecution may be instituted no later than 5 years after the day on which the Commissioner became aware of the facts giving rise to the prosecution but, in any case, no later than 10 years after the day on which the offence was committed.

During an election period, if there is evidence leading the Commissioner to believe on reasonable grounds that a person has committed, is about to commit or is likely to commit an act or omission that is contrary to the Act, the Commissioner may, after taking into account the nature and seriousness of the act or omission and the need to ensure fairness of the electoral process and the public interest, apply to a court for an injunction. The Commissioner may also conclude a compliance agreement with a person the Commissioner has reasonable grounds to believe has committed, is about to commit or is likely to commit an act or omission that could constitute an offence under the Act. This is a voluntary agreement between the Commissioner and the person, by which the person agrees to terms and conditions necessary to ensure compliance with the Act. The Commissioner makes a summary of the compliance agreement public.

Depending on the gravity of the offence, convictions can result in fines or prison terms. Courts may impose additional penalties, such as required community service or compensation for damages. A person convicted of certain offences may also lose his or her right to be a candidate in a federal election for five years (in the case of an illegal practice) or seven years (in the case of a corrupt practice).

## **The Broadcasting Arbitrator**

In consultation with the political parties, the Chief Electoral Officer appoints a Broadcasting Arbitrator, who allocates both paid air time (provided by broadcasters) and free air time (provided by network operators) to registered political parties during a general election and to referendum committees during a referendum. Broadcasting time is allocated according to a formula set out in the *Canada Elections Act*. The Broadcasting Arbitrator also arbitrates time-allocation disputes between political parties and broadcasters or network operators.

# Main Activities

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*What does Elections Canada do to carry out its mandate?*

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## Managing Field Operations

Preparing, managing and delivering field operations for electoral events are central to the mandate of Elections Canada. Among a multitude of operational tasks, the main ones are to:

- manage the supply of goods and services for an election, from ballot boxes to phone connections for local Elections Canada offices
- print, assemble and ship all election materials to every riding at the appropriate time
- develop the policies, procedures, manuals, forms and tools that facilitate registering electors, voting and managing an election
- administer the Special Voting Rules<sup>1</sup> and accessibility programs that make it possible for all those who have the right to vote to exercise that right
- oversee the appointment and training of returning officers, assistant returning officers and automation coordinators, who administer an election in each electoral district
- hire and train field liaison officers, who support returning officers in their work and provide guidance and advice during and between elections
- oversee and coordinate the administration of electoral events at the riding level
- manage the registration of electors during an electoral event
- manage the voting process itself

## Maintaining the National Register of Electors

Since 1997, Elections Canada has maintained the National Register of Electors, a permanent list of Canadians who are qualified to vote. The Register contains each elector's name, gender, date of birth, mailing and residential address, electoral district, polling division and unique identifier.

The Register is maintained:

- through partnerships with provincial, territorial and municipal electoral bodies to share data and monitor data quality

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<sup>1</sup> The Special Voting Rules are set out under Part 11 of the *Canada Elections Act*. They allow Canadian electors to cast their ballot by mail or in person at their local Elections Canada office.

- by updating it with data from federal, provincial and territorial sources as well as information provided by electors during and between elections

The Register is used to produce:

- updated lists of electors each year for members of Parliament and, upon request, for registered political parties, to be sent by November 15 of each year
- the preliminary lists of electors for use at electoral events

After address updates, deletions and new registrations during the 2011 election period and at the advance and ordinary polls, the number of electors on the final lists was 24,257,592.

The personal information of electors in the Register is protected under the *Canada Elections Act* and the *Privacy Act*. The *Canada Elections Act* allows an elector to remove his or her name from the Register by notifying the Chief Electoral Officer in writing.

The limited information obtained from federal data sources (the Canada Revenue Agency and Citizenship and Immigration Canada) may be gathered only with the consent of the individual concerned and may be used for electoral purposes only. Improper use of electoral information is an offence under the *Canada Elections Act*.

An elector who does not want his or her personal information to be shared with other jurisdictions for electoral purposes may notify the Chief Electoral Officer in writing. Opting out of the Register or declining to share one's information in the Register does not affect the elector's right to vote.

In addition to the National Register of Electors, Elections Canada maintains a register of electors who are temporarily living outside Canada. This International Register of Electors includes, among other information, the electors' electoral districts and their civic and mailing addresses. During the 2011 election, more than 10,700 Canadian citizens abroad were sent the necessary materials to vote by mail.

## **Electoral Geography**

Making it possible for more than 24 million electors to vote within a 12-hour period is no easy task. Elections Canada assigns each elector to the polling station that serves the polling division where he or she resides. Efficient management of this process relies heavily on keeping electoral maps and geographic tools up to date and accurate. Elections Canada carries out various tasks in this area.

- It maintains the National Geographic Database jointly with Statistics Canada. This database contains data on streets in Canada, including their names and address ranges and many geographical features. It is used by Elections Canada for electoral operations and redistribution and by Statistics Canada for census operations.

- It maintains the Electoral Geography Database, which is derived from the National Geographic Database and contains cartographic representations of federal electoral districts, with all polling divisions and advance polling districts. This database is used to create the thousands of maps necessary for elections and to assign electors to the correct polling divisions based on their addresses.
- It plans and maintains the Geographic Information System to produce both printed and digital electoral maps as well as a variety of other geography-related documents.
- It provides technical support and digitized mapping tools to the electoral boundaries commissions.

#### **Geographic Information System**

Elections Canada’s geographic databases provide the framework for locating electors in the National Register of Electors in an electoral district and assigning them to a polling division (“geocoding”), and for readjusting electoral boundaries after a 10-year census. Political parties receive computer-readable versions of electoral maps as well as access to the related Web application, GeoExplore, which returning officers use to manage elections in their electoral district.

Building on these innovative technologies, the Elections Canada website allows electors to enter their postal code to obtain information on their electoral district and member of Parliament and, during elections, the location of their polling station and contact information for their local Elections Canada office.

### **Ensuring Accessibility**

For several decades, Elections Canada has strived to provide a fully accessible voting process. The special ballot, advance polls, level access, mobile polls and a template for electors with a visual impairment have all contributed greatly to achieving that goal. More recently, Elections Canada has made progress in increasing polling site accessibility and will continue to work with the disability community to better understand and, to the extent possible, reduce any barriers its members may face.

In 2008, a complaint was filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission alleging that the lack of level access to a polling station in the electoral district of Toronto Centre during the March 2008 by-election and the October 2008 general election constituted a breach of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. In February 2010, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued a decision that required Elections Canada to implement measures to increase the accessibility of the electoral process for electors with a physical disability. The Order had a timetable of one year. Elections Canada fully complied with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal’s requirements: it updated its accessibility policies, implemented a new accessibility complaints process, provided better signage to help electors find accessible entrances to polling sites, consulted more widely with disability groups and updated its training tools for election officers dealing with accessibility needs.

There is also a recognition that all electors should be able to cast a ballot not only in secret, but independently. In a 2010 by-election in Winnipeg North, Elections Canada conducted a pilot project involving an assistive voting device for use by persons with a visual impairment or limited dexterity. The devices were placed at all advance polls, the local Elections Canada office and seven central polling sites on voting day. While this particular device did not meet expectations, the agency will continue to study alternative methods that could facilitate the voting process for electors with disabilities.

In another pilot project tested during the 2010 by-elections, the voter information card was accepted as one of two authorized pieces of identification at polling stations serving seniors' residences, long-term care facilities, Aboriginal reserves and on-campus student residences. It proved successful in providing accessibility and was expanded for these groups of electors to all electoral districts at the 2011 general election.

Elections Canada is also part of a government-wide effort to respond within a reasonable time period to a Federal Court of Appeal order to provide persons with physical disabilities equal access to, and benefit from, government information and services provided online to the public. The agency has worked first to ensure that the most important information on its website is compliant, such as the home page and all pages and applications linked to it. This includes the Voter Information Service, which is used by electors at general elections and by-elections to find their electoral district, local Elections Canada office, list of candidates and voting locations.

Elections Canada will continue to make improvements to assist Web users with visual, auditory, mobility or cognitive impairments. This involves ensuring its numerous Web applications are compliant, namely, the online voter registration service and others dealing with political entity registration and financing, election night results and official voting results.

## **Operational and Strategic Planning**

Elections Canada must be ready at all times to deliver a federal electoral event, be it a general election, by-election or referendum. Maintaining this state of readiness requires thorough planning and coordination of all activities, and a high degree of ability to adjust quickly as political events unfold.

Elections Canada has developed numerous customized planning tools to prepare for upcoming electoral events and manage the timely deployment of services after an election has been called. (For more information on what happens during an election, see General Election Countdown under the section The Federal Electoral Process.) A typical electoral event readiness plan tracks more than 800 high-level, interrelated activities that must all be completed before an election. Advanced management information systems help monitor the progress of an electoral event, at both national and local levels, against pre-set targets and benchmarks.

Strategic planning enables Elections Canada to develop and coordinate longer-term initiatives to address emerging national trends and improve election management.

## Policy, Research and Analysis

Elections Canada is constantly connected with the electorate and the broader environment, including Parliament, the academic community, the media and the international scene. These connections enable it to:

- refine its knowledge of electoral matters so that it can support the Chief Electoral Officer in developing his recommendations to amend the *Canada Elections Act* and in advising parliamentarians on electoral matters;
- support strategic planning, monitor progress in delivering electoral events and complete corporate projects by conducting regular information gathering and analysis;
- improve how it delivers elections by establishing links and partnerships with academics, research institutes, provincial and national bodies, and international organizations involved in electoral matters; and
- keep in touch with the Canadian public by making information available in a variety of ways, including through its website.

### Elections Canada on the Web

The most up-to-date information on the Canadian electoral process is accessible worldwide on the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca). The site provides a wealth of information on all aspects of federal elections, including:

- the Voter Information Service, which allows electors to enter their postal code and learn how, when and where to register and vote
- the Online Elector Registration Service, which electors can use to find out if they are registered to vote in federal elections or to update their address
- profiles of individual federal ridings, with maps, contact information for the returning officer and a list of all candidates during elections
- voter registration forms, along with instructions, for Canadian electors in or outside Canada who cannot or do not wish to vote at a polling station during an election
- sections for political entities that inform them about their rights and obligations and provide guidance, handbooks and reporting tools
- a live feed of election results on election night
- a searchable section of financial returns from all political entities
- media information, publications and teaching resources and materials
- information about federal representation and electoral boundaries readjustment

## Implementing Outreach and Communications Programs

The *Canada Elections Act* mandates the Chief Electoral Officer to implement public education and information programs to make the electoral process better known to the public, particularly to those persons and groups most likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights. In carrying out this responsibility, Elections Canada:

- develops and implements the tools and messages used to inform Canadian citizens in Canada and abroad about their right to vote and how to exercise it, through public and media relations, advertising and educational activities
- designs, tests and carries out multi-pronged national advertising campaigns, informing electors about how, where and when to register and vote

- produces and distributes publications in print, electronic and video formats, such as news releases and advisories, reports to Parliament, information documents and educational kits
- encourages returning officers to appoint, where warranted, community relations officers to help identify and address the needs of communities with significant Aboriginal, youth, ethnocultural or homeless populations, as well as seniors in residences or long-term care facilities, and encourage their participation in the electoral process
- consults and maintains contact with Aboriginal, youth, ethnocultural and disability groups to make sure that the information and services they need are provided
- develops educational tools for teachers and students, such as election simulation kits, and works with non-governmental organizations supporting civic education programs
- maintains a website that provides a live feed of voting results on election night and special sections dedicated to youth, Aboriginal electors, ethnocultural communities, electors with special needs and political entities
- answers questions from the public during and between elections by toll-free telephone (1-800-463-6868), through its website and by mail

## **Overseeing Political Financing**

Reforms that came into force in January 2004 changed political financing rules and extended regulation to electoral district associations, nomination contestants and leadership contestants. As a result, Elections Canada's responsibilities in the area of political financing include:

- reviewing for compliance with the *Canada Elections Act* and publishing:
  - annual financial returns, and statements of assets and liabilities, of registered political parties and their registered electoral district associations
  - quarterly financial returns from registered parties that receive quarterly allowances
  - registered party returns on general election expenses
  - leadership contestant registrations, weekly returns and campaign returns
  - nomination campaign returns for contestants who receive or spend \$1,000 or more
  - candidate electoral campaign returns for general elections and by-elections
  - third party election advertising returns
- reviewing the financial returns of registered referendum committees after a referendum
- administering the partial reimbursement of election expenses to eligible candidates (after a general election or by-election) and to parties (after a general election)
- administering quarterly allowance payments to qualifying registered political parties
- administering audit subsidies payable to auditors for candidates and registered associations

## **Taking Advantage of Information Technology**

Computers and networking are integral to how Elections Canada manages and delivers elections, and it carries out a number of activities to take advantage of this technology:

- managing and supporting electronic networks, intranets and computer hardware and software, both at its offices in Ottawa and in the field throughout electoral events
- maintaining and improving applications supporting the National Register of Electors and the Electoral Geography Database, as well as several other tools that support real-time monitoring of and reporting on electoral events;
- developing customized applications that support key services, such as the Voter Information Service, real-time broadcasting of election results and online reporting for political entities
- developing and supporting customized applications that enable registered political parties, registered electoral district associations, candidates, nomination contestants and leadership contestants to complete and submit financial returns required by the *Canada Elections Act*

## **International Co-operation**

The Canadian electoral system is now recognized internationally as a model for countries that are implementing and consolidating their own democratic institutions.

As a recognized supporter of democracy throughout the world, Canada is in a position to share electoral knowledge with emerging and established democracies, and to offer help to countries that request advice and assistance in planning and conducting free and fair elections. Since 1980, Elections Canada has participated in more than 400 international democratic development missions in some 100 countries.

This support is usually provided through multilateral programs, and it takes many forms: pre-election assessments, technical advice, training and civic education, monitoring elections and providing election materials.

The agency also welcomes visitors, including election administrators, parliamentarians and civil society members from around the world, briefing them about Canada's electoral system and how it is managed. In addition to sharing its experience with evolving democracies, Elections Canada participates in various forums to assist in developing international standards and to share knowledge and best practices related to every aspect of democratic elections and redistribution.



# The Federal Electoral Process

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*How are Canadian elections prepared and conducted?*

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While candidates and political parties are the most visible players during elections, they are not the only ones involved. Behind the scenes, thousands of election workers play an essential role in making sure that each electoral event is fair and well managed. For the most recent general election in 2011, more than 180,000 poll officials worked on election day at more than 66,000 stationary and mobile polls. Staff were also needed for the 4,700 advance polls and in the local Elections Canada offices for the full election period, bringing the total number of election worker positions filled to almost 236,000. A returning officer in each of the 308 electoral districts coordinates the activities of these workers. Field liaison officers are also hired to assist returning officers in their duties, in coordination with Elections Canada, and to liaise with the media in the field. Based on local needs, community relations officers are hired to reach out to those most likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights – young people and students, seniors, members of Aboriginal and ethnocultural communities, and homeless people.

## Preparing for an Electoral Event

Elections Canada must always be ready to deliver a general election, by-election or referendum. It updates the National Register of Electors year-round, trains new returning officers and prepares many tonnes of materials. In the field, returning officers complete pre-event assignments, such as setting up polling divisions and selecting potential locations for polling sites, among many other tasks.

## The National Register of Electors

Elections Canada uses data from the National Register of Electors to produce the preliminary lists of electors and voter information cards for a general election, by-election or referendum. Provincial, territorial and municipal electoral agencies may also use information from the Register to update their voters lists, as permitted under the *Canada Elections Act* and where data-sharing agreements have been signed.

According to Statistics Canada, about 17 percent of voter information changes every year. The Register is updated continually with data from these sources:

- the Canada Revenue Agency, for people who tick both of the “Yes” boxes in the Elections Canada section of their tax form, which asks if they have Canadian citizenship and agree to share their name, date of birth and address
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada, for new citizens who tick both of the “Yes” boxes on their citizenship application form, agreeing to share their name, gender, date of birth and address

- National Defence, for Canadian Forces Regular Force members who have completed a *Statement of Ordinary Residence* form
- provincial and territorial driver's licence agencies<sup>2</sup>
- provincial and territorial vital statistics agencies<sup>3</sup>
- provincial electoral agencies with permanent lists of electors
- voters lists from recent elections in other Canadian jurisdictions
- electors themselves when they register to vote or update their registration during and between elections

### Online Elector Registration Service

In April 2012, Elections Canada launched the first phase of the Online Elector Registration Service on its website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca). This Internet-based service is designed to offer Canadians an additional and convenient way to check whether they are registered to vote, update their registration information, or be added to the National Register of Electors. It does not replace, but rather complements, current registration methods.

Since the *Canada Elections Act* requires a signature and/or documentary proof of identity, or both for some transactions, only certain functionality is available in this phase. It allows electors to use online registration **between elections** to do the following:

- Confirm whether they are registered to vote (using their name, address, gender and date of birth for identification purposes)
- Update their previously registered address (using their name, address, gender and date of birth for identification purposes)
- Add their name to the Register (in limited situations). New potential electors identified from Canada Revenue Agency information can add their names by confirming their citizenship after having consented to share information with the National Register of Electors. Electors must provide their name, address, gender and date of birth for identification purposes, and their driver's licence number to validate their identity. All other new electors who wish to register can use the service to fill in a form that they can print, sign and mail or fax to Elections Canada along with proof of identity and address.

Once the modernization of Elections Canada's field voter registration system is complete, as planned for 2015, services will be made available **during elections**.

Information submitted through the Online Elector Registration Service is used to update the Register. Numerous security safeguards are in place to protect electors' privacy.

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<sup>2</sup> Except for the provinces of Manitoba, with which Elections Canada currently has no agreement, and Quebec, where driver information updates are reflected in the provincial electoral list.

<sup>3</sup> Except in Quebec, where vital statistics information is reflected in the provincial electoral list.

## **Returning Officers**

The key election officer in each of the 308 federal electoral districts is the returning officer. Appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer through an open and merit-based competitive process, returning officers work under the general supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer. They receive support from Elections Canada staff in Ottawa and a network of regional field liaison officers who provide functional leadership.

Legally, a returning officer must be a Canadian citizen, at least 18 years of age, who lives in the electoral district where he or she is appointed. In practice, however, the returning officer must be much more. The job is demanding and the duties varied. Along with serious commitment, detailed knowledge of the federal electoral process and a wide range of management skills are essential.

Returning officers must abide by a code of professional conduct and must abstain from all politically partisan activities, both during and between elections and referendums. They are appointed for a 10-year term and remain in the position for that time, unless the electoral district boundaries change as a result of redistribution or they move out of the electoral district, resign or are removed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

## **Setting Up Polling Divisions**

To facilitate the vote, every electoral district must be divided into polling divisions, and a voters list must be drawn up for each. Polling divisions are also used to direct electors to their specific voting location. There are more than 64,000 polling divisions across the country.

## **Selecting Locations for Polling Sites**

Returning officers select convenient and accessible locations for polling sites, for both advance voting and election day. Polling sites are usually set up in well-known, central locations such as community centres and schools. They must be equipped with level access to meet the requirements of the *Canada Elections Act*.

## **Preparing Supplies**

The agency develops administrative procedures and prepares maps, instruction kits, forms, information materials, ballot paper and boxes, and other supplies that will be needed to conduct an election. If an election is thought to be imminent, early shipments are sent to returning officers' homes and staging points across the country.

## **Launching an Election**

For a general election, the Governor General, on the advice of Cabinet, dissolves Parliament and sets the date of the election and the date by which returning officers must return the writs. A writ is a formal document directing a returning officer to conduct an election in his or her electoral district and on which, after election day, the returning officer writes the name of the winning candidate. By law, the amount of time between the issue of the writs and election day must be at least 36 days. Recent elections have usually lasted 36 days. An exception was the 39th general election, concluding on January 23, 2006, which spanned 55 days and included the holiday period.

While the Governor General has the discretion to decide when to dissolve Parliament, the *Canada Elections Act* otherwise requires that a general election be held on the third Monday of October in the fourth calendar year following polling day for the previous general election. A federal election may also occur sooner if the Government loses a confidence vote in the House of Commons.

## **Issuing the Writs**

Once advised of the election, the Chief Electoral Officer sends a notice to all 308 returning officers, directing them to rent office space, open local Elections Canada offices and provide the services that will enable electors to exercise their right to vote. At the same time, the writs of election are being printed, giving the dates for election day and the close of nominations for candidates. After signing a writ, the Chief Electoral Officer sends it to the returning officer appointed for the electoral district to which the writ relates. The returning officer then signs and issues a notice of election for that electoral district, informing voters of important dates and other details.

## **Opening the Local Elections Canada Offices**

On receiving a notice from the Chief Electoral Officer, each returning officer rents space and furniture in an accessible location in his or her electoral district and opens an office. This office is open during the hours set by the Chief Electoral Officer, and it serves as the centre of field operations for that electoral district for the duration of the election. Staff must be hired and trained immediately because the office is expected to begin functioning without delay.

## **General Election Countdown**

### **The Election Call**

- The Governor General issues a proclamation dissolving Parliament and directing that the writs of election be issued.
- The Chief Electoral Officer issues the writs, which direct returning officers to hold an election in each electoral district.
- Returning officers open their offices.
- Voting by special ballot begins.
- Elections Canada sends preliminary lists of electors to returning officers.
- Preliminary candidate and party election expenses limits are calculated.
- Revision of the lists of electors begins.
- Returning officers mail voter information cards to registered electors.
- Returning officers receive candidates' nomination papers and deposits.
- Returning officers have regular ballots printed.
- Canadian Forces electors begin voting.
- Voting takes place at advance polls.
- Voting by incarcerated electors and those in acute care hospitals begins.
- Revision ends, and the deadline for special ballot registration expires.
- Revised candidate and party election expenses limits are calculated.

### **Election Day**

- Electors vote at ordinary and mobile polling stations.
- The ballots are counted in each polling division and electoral district.
- Preliminary voting results are available after the polls close across the country.

### **Wrap-up**

- Returning officers carry out the validation of the results.
- Judicial recounts are conducted, if necessary.
- Returning officers return the writs, which declare the winning candidate in each riding.
- New members of Parliament are sworn in, and the new Parliament is convened.
- The Chief Electoral Officer reports on the election and the official results.
- Candidates, political parties and third parties submit financial reports.
- Candidates' and political parties' expenses are partially reimbursed.
- Candidates dispose of surplus funds.

## **Revising the Preliminary Lists**

As soon as possible after the election is called, Elections Canada sends the preliminary lists of electors to each returning officer. Soon afterward, the returning officers mail a voter information card to every registered elector. Each card shows the elector's name and address, says when and where to vote and how to contact the returning officer, and indicates whether the polling station has level access.

Between the beginning of the election period and the sixth day before election day, the lists of electors are revised as needed by adding, deleting and correcting the information they contain. If an elector has moved within an electoral district, he or she can have the information changed over the telephone. Voters can also register in person at the advance polls or on election day after showing proof of identity and address. The returning officer prepares revised lists of electors to be used at the advance polls as well as a second set of revised lists, called the official lists, to be used on election day. In addition, on the 19th day before election day, the returning officer distributes to each candidate who requests it an electronic copy of the most current list of electors for that electoral district.

Returning officers also carry out a targeted revision of selected areas of their electoral district. During the revision period, returning officers send pairs of revising agents door to door in areas where electors are less likely to appear on the preliminary voters list at their current address. Examples of such areas are new residential developments, college and university residences, high-mobility neighbourhoods (including off-campus student housing) and long-term care facilities.

### **Nominating Candidates**

After the returning officer publishes the *Notice of Election*, candidates have until the close of nominations at 2:00 p.m. on the 21st day before election day to submit their nomination paper. Each paper includes the name, address and signature of at least 100 electors (or, in certain specified large and sparsely populated ridings, 50 electors) resident in the electoral district who support the nomination, and it is submitted to the returning officer along with a \$1,000 deposit. The returning officer then has 48 hours after the nomination paper is filed to verify that the documentation is complete and complies with the *Canada Elections Act* before confirming or refusing the candidacy. If a candidate is refused, he or she may submit corrected papers up until the close of nominations.

### **Registering Political Parties**

A political party must be properly registered with the Chief Electoral Officer if it wants to issue tax receipts for contributions, be eligible to receive quarterly allowances and partial reimbursements of its election expenses, and have its name appear on the ballots under its candidates' names. An eligible party becomes registered when it endorses at least one candidate in a general election or by-election, so long as its application for registration was made with the Chief Electoral Officer at least 60 days before the writs were issued and has not been withdrawn. A party whose application was made after the 60 days becomes registered for the next general election or any by-election that precedes it if the party endorses a candidate in that election.

### **Requirements for Political Party Registration**

As part of the information and documentation required, a political party must include the following in its application for registration:

- a copy of the party's resolution appointing the leader
- the names and addresses of the chief agent, auditor and officers of the party as well as their signed consent to act
- the names and addresses of at least 250 electors and their signed declarations that they are members of the party and that they support its application for registration
- a signed declaration by the leader that one of the fundamental purposes of the party is to participate in public affairs by endorsing one or more of its members as candidates and supporting their election

The Chief Electoral Officer must be satisfied that the application is complete and the information it contains is accurate. The Chief Electoral Officer may ask for additional documents (including the party's constitution, by-laws and program) to determine that one of the party's fundamental purposes meets the legislative requirement.

### **Voter Information Card and Reminder Brochure**

As soon as possible after the issue of the writs but not later than the 24th day before election day, returning officers send a voter information card<sup>4</sup> to each elector whose name appears on the preliminary lists.<sup>5</sup> In addition to confirming an elector's registered status, the card provides the information needed to vote at an advance poll or on election day. This includes the address of the elector's advance and ordinary polling stations as well as the dates and hours for voting.

Shortly afterward, Elections Canada sends a generic reminder brochure to every household in Canada. The brochure instructs electors to contact Elections Canada if they have not received a voter information card. The reminder brochure also lists the dates for voting in advance, on election day and by special ballot, as well as Elections Canada's telephone and teletypewriter (TTY) numbers and website address. In addition, it lists all of the documents that voters can use to prove their identity and address when they vote, and explains all of the options available for identifying themselves at the polls.

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<sup>4</sup> The *Canada Elections Act* refers to this document as a "notice of confirmation of registration."

<sup>5</sup> A voter information card is also sent to each elector who registers during the revision period of the election.

## **Voting**

There are a number of ways to vote. The most common way is at the ordinary polls on election day. Voters can also cast their ballots at an advance poll, or they can vote by special ballot either at the local Elections Canada office or through the mail. As additional services, Elections Canada provides mobile polls for voters living in chronic care institutions and, in certain cases, bedside voting by special ballot for voters in acute care hospitals. In exceptional circumstances – where a voter is registered for a special ballot but cannot go to the local Elections Canada office or mark the ballot because of a disability – an election officer can go to the voter’s home to help mark and receive the ballot in the presence of a witness.

### **Ordinary Polls**

Most voters choose to cast their ballots at the ordinary polls on election day. For example, in the 41st general election, 84 percent of voters chose to vote on that day. During the hours that the polls are open, electors go to the polling station indicated on their voter information card, have their name crossed off the voters list and go behind a voting screen to mark their ballot.

Electors who have not already registered to vote can register at the polling station on election day (or at the advance polls) after showing proof of identity and address.

### **Voter Identification at the Polls**

When voting at the polls on election day, or at an advance poll, voters are required to prove their identity and address before being handed a ballot.

Electors have three options for proving their identity and address:

- An elector can show one original piece of identification, issued by a Canadian government (federal, provincial or local) or agency of that government, that contains his or her photo, name and address. An example is a driver’s licence.
- An elector can show two original pieces of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer. Both pieces must have the elector’s name, and one must also have his or her address. Examples include a health card and a hydro bill.
- An elector can take an oath and be vouched for by another elector who knows him or her, such as a neighbour or a roommate. (Both people will be required to make a sworn statement.) This person must show authorized identification, and his or her name must appear on the list of electors in the same polling division as the person being vouched for. This person can vouch for only one person, and the person who is vouched for cannot vouch for another elector.

A complete list of the pieces of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer can be found online at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

## Voting Hours on Election Day

The *Canada Elections Act* requires polling stations to be open for voting for 12 consecutive hours on election day.

The hours of voting are staggered by time zone so that a majority of results will be available at approximately the same time across the country. If necessary, the Chief Electoral Officer may modify the voting hours in a riding to make them coincide with the voting hours in other ridings in the same time zone.

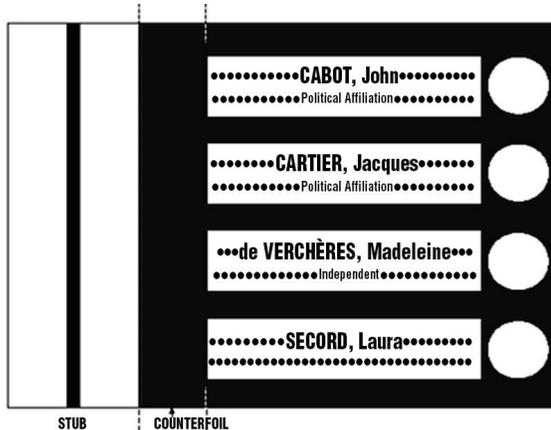
### Staggered Voting Hours

To compensate for Canada's six time zones, polls open and close (in local time) as follows:

Newfoundland Time	8:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Atlantic Time	8:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Eastern Time	9:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.
Central Time*	8:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Mountain Time*	7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Pacific Time	7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

\*In Saskatchewan, when Daylight Saving Time is in effect for the rest of the country, voting hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. (local time).

### Regular Paper Ballot



The election ballot lists the names of the candidates in alphabetical order along with each one's political affiliation, unless they choose to have either "Independent" or no affiliation under their name.

The voter takes the ballot behind the voting screen and makes a clear mark in the circle beside the preferred name.

### Marking the Ballot

The voter goes to the polling station specified on the voter information card, and the poll clerk crosses the voter's name off the voters list. After verifying the voter's identity and address (or after he or she has been vouched for), the deputy returning officer hands the voter a folded ballot with the initials of the deputy returning officer on the back of the ballot.

The voter then goes behind a table with a voting screen and places a mark in the white circle next to the name of the candidate of his or her choice. The voter re-folds the ballot so that the deputy returning officer's initials are visible and hands it to the deputy returning officer. The deputy returning officer checks the initials and the number shown on the counterfoil, removes the counterfoil and returns the ballot to the voter. The voter, or the deputy returning officer at the voter's request, places the folded ballot in the ballot box. The poll clerk then places a mark in the

“Voted” column beside the voter’s name on the voters list. These procedures apply to all voters to ensure the secrecy of the vote.

### **Advance Voting**

Three days – Friday, Saturday and Monday, the 10th, 9th and 7th days before election day – are designated for advance voting; they are meant to accommodate electors who will be unable, or do not wish, to vote on election day. Advance polls are open from noon to 8:00 p.m. The dates and the location of each elector’s designated advance polling station are indicated on the voter information card. The voting procedure is almost the same as at the ordinary polls. In the most recent general election, the advance polls were used by 14 percent of voters.

An elector whose name is not on the revised voters list can register in person at the designated advance polling station by showing satisfactory proof of identity and address. After having his or her identity and address verified (or after being vouched for), the elector is registered and handed a ballot.

### **Special Ballot**

The *Canada Elections Act* provides alternative voting procedures specifically designed for electors who:

- are temporarily residing outside Canada (for less than five consecutive years, with certain exceptions) at the time of an election
- reside in Canada and wish to vote by special ballot
- are members of the Canadian Forces
- are incarcerated

Electors **residing outside Canada** may apply at any time to be listed in the International Register of Electors. Shortly after an election period begins, those listed are mailed a special ballot voting kit containing a special ballot and three envelopes. They can submit their ballot through a Canadian embassy, Canadian high commission, Canadian Forces base or Canadian consular office, or directly to Elections Canada in Ottawa. Those who are not yet listed can register for a special ballot during the election period until the sixth day before election day. Application forms are available at Canadian diplomatic or consular offices, on the Elections Canada website or directly from Elections Canada in Ottawa.

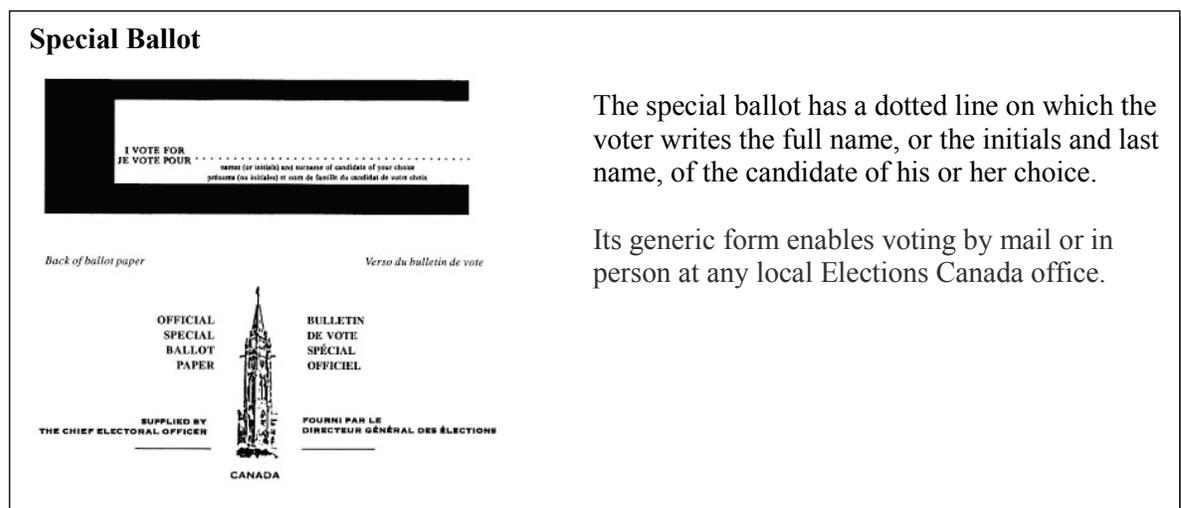
Electors **residing in Canada** can register to vote by special ballot at the latest on the sixth day before election day, whether they are in Canada or travelling abroad. Application forms are available at local Elections Canada offices, Canadian embassies, consular offices, passport offices, on the Elections Canada website, or directly from Elections Canada in Ottawa. Once the application is accepted, a special ballot voting kit is mailed to the elector. As well, once the application for registration and special ballot of an elector residing in Canada has been accepted, the elector cannot vote in any other way.

Regardless of where they cast their special ballot, electors can vote only for a candidate who is running in their own electoral district. To preserve the secrecy of the vote, after an elector marks the ballot, he or she seals it in the unmarked envelope, puts that sealed envelope in an outer envelope with the name of the electoral district on it, seals the second envelope and puts it in the mailing envelope.

Special ballots can be returned in person, by mail or by courier (with the exception of those from incarcerated electors). If they are voting from outside their electoral district, electors must ensure that their ballot arrives at Elections Canada in Ottawa before 6:00 p.m., Eastern Time, on election day to be counted as valid. If they are voting from within their electoral district, their ballot must arrive at their local Elections Canada office before the polling stations close on election day.

Electors who are in the Canadian Forces or incarcerated also vote by special ballot, using slightly different procedures specifically designed for them. The former vote at military bases or civilian polling stations and the latter in correctional institutions. Canadian Forces electors can vote by mail or at polling stations set up in their units during a specific voting period. They can also vote at the civilian polling station associated with the address on their *Statement of Ordinary Residence*, provided they are residing there at the time of an electoral event.

Electors who are in a correctional institution or federal penitentiary may vote within their facility on the 10th day before polling day. They must first complete a special ballot application form, available from a staff member appointed for the event. Their application forms and marked ballots are forwarded by special arrangement to Elections Canada in Ottawa. Alternatively, inmates may choose to mail their ballot themselves.



The special ballot has a dotted line on which the voter writes the full name, or the initials and last name, of the candidate of his or her choice.

Its generic form enables voting by mail or in person at any local Elections Canada office.

## Accessibility

The right to vote in federal elections in Canada is guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. To make the process accessible to all electors, the *Canada Elections Act* provides for a variety of flexible voting methods and entrusts Elections Canada with addressing any obstacles to voting.

All local Elections Canada offices, all polling stations and all other premises used during an election, either on election day or advance voting days, must have level access. Under exceptional local circumstances, the returning officer may seek specific authorization from the Chief Electoral Officer to use a polling station that lacks level access. Accessibility is indicated on the voter information card, which is sent to every registered elector shortly after the issue of the writs. If the polling station of a voter with a disability is among the very few that cannot offer level access, the voter can request a transfer certificate to vote at another polling station with level access.

Elections Canada welcomes feedback from electors on their experience at the polls. In the 2011 general election, a *Polling Site Accessibility Feedback Form* was introduced at all polling locations, local Elections Canada offices and on the agency's website. The information collected alerts returning officers to any concerns, such as about parking, signage or walkways, and greatly assists in resolving them quickly.

In addition, mobile polls serve institutions for seniors or persons with physical disabilities. The poll moves from one institution to another on election day to make it convenient for electors in each location to vote. There were almost 1,700 mobile polls at the most recent general election.

Wherever possible, election officers at polling stations speak both of Canada's official languages. Interpreters may accompany voters to assist them, if required.

A large-print ballot mock-up and a template enable voters with a visual impairment to mark their ballots privately. Voters with a disability or who cannot read may, on request, have a deputy returning officer help them vote, in the presence of a poll clerk. A friend or relative may also assist them.

In special cases, voters with a disability may vote at home in the presence of an election officer and a witness.

#### **Distribution of Valid Votes, by Voting Method (2004–2011)**

Increases in the use of advance polls and a decline in the use of election day stationary polls are illustrated below by comparing the four most recent general elections. Meanwhile, the percentage of electors using the convenient special ballot has remained almost constant, with the exception of an upswing during the winter election of 2006.

<b>Voting method</b>	<b>June 28, 2004</b> %	<b>January 23, 2006</b> %	<b>October 14, 2008</b> %	<b>May 2, 2011</b> %
<b>Election day polls (stationary)</b>	88.3	85.7	86.3	82.9
<b>Mobile polls</b>	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0
<b>Special ballot</b>	1.8	3.0	1.8	1.9
<b>Advance polls</b>	9.2	10.5	11.0	14.3
<b>Number of valid votes</b>	13,564,702	14,817,159	13,834,294	14,723,980

## **The Results**

Shortly after the polls close on election day, the preliminary results begin to come in to Elections Canada. As the reports arrive from the various polling stations on election night, Elections Canada releases the results to the media for immediate publication or broadcast in locations where all polls have closed. Simultaneously, Elections Canada hosts a live feed on its website of the preliminary results by riding, by major centre, by province or territory, nationwide and by political party leader.

## **Validation of the Results**

Within seven days after election day (unless exceptional circumstances prevent some ballot boxes from being available on time), each returning officer validates the results by examining the documents relating to the vote count to verify the election night calculations. Only after the validation has been completed can the official voting results be published.

## **Judicial Recounts**

A judicial recount is automatically requested by the returning officer and conducted by a judge if the number of votes separating the candidate with the most votes and any other candidate is less than one one-thousandth of the total number of votes cast in that electoral district. A recount may also be conducted if it appears to a judge to whom a request for a recount has been made that an error may have occurred during the count.

If the two top-ranking candidates have received the same number of votes after a recount, a by-election is held in that electoral district.

## **Election Reports**

### **The Return of the Writs**

After the sixth day following the validation of the results (or immediately after a judicial recount), the returning officer records the winning candidate's name on the writ received at the beginning of the election, signs it and returns it to the Chief Electoral Officer.

### **The Chief Electoral Officer's Reports**

After each election, the law requires that the Chief Electoral Officer prepare certain reports.

- The first covers the official voting results by polling division and is published without delay after a general election or, in the case of a by-election, within 90 days after the return of the writ.
- The second is submitted to the Speaker of the House of Commons within 90 days of the return of the writs of a general election, or within 90 days of the end of a year in which one or more by-elections occurred. It is a report on matters or events that have arisen in connection with the election and any activities of Elections Canada since the date of the previous narrative report that the Chief Electoral Officer considers should be brought to the attention of the House of Commons.

- As soon as possible after a general election, the Chief Electoral Officer also reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons on any changes to the electoral legislation that he or she judges desirable for the better administration of the *Canada Elections Act*.

Elections Canada publishes each of these reports and makes them available online at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

## **By-elections**

Between general elections, when a seat in the House of Commons becomes officially vacant, the Speaker must inform the Chief Electoral Officer without delay with a Speaker's warrant for the issue of a writ for the election of a new member. Between the 11th and the 180th day after the Chief Electoral Officer receives this warrant, the Governor General, acting on the advice of Cabinet, must set the date for holding a by-election.

Once the date is known, the Chief Electoral Officer issues a writ to the returning officer of the electoral district concerned, directing him or her to hold a by-election on that date. If a general election is called after the by-election writ has been issued and before the by-election is held, the writ for the by-election is considered withdrawn, and the Chief Electoral Officer publishes a notice in the *Canada Gazette* to that effect.

### **Conduct of By-elections**

A by-election is conducted in almost the same way as a general election, except that it is held in only one or a few specified electoral districts. There are some other differences, as outlined in the table below.

<b>General Election</b>	<b>By-election</b>
A general election always follows a dissolution of the House of Commons.	The House of Commons is not dissolved.
To allow electors in the Canadian Forces to vote, a polling station is set up on every base for a specified period before election day.	Elections Canada automatically sends a special ballot voting kit to each Canadian Forces elector who is registered in a riding where a by-election is taking place.
To allow electors in correctional institutions to vote, a polling station is set up in every correctional institution, and voting takes place on the 10th day before election day.	Elections Canada automatically sends a special ballot voting kit to each incarcerated elector who is registered in a riding where a by-election is taking place.
To vote in a general election, the elector must be ordinarily resident in the electoral district on election day.	To vote in a by-election, the elector must have been ordinarily resident in the electoral district from the beginning of the revision period until election day.
Political parties receive partial reimbursement for the election expenses they incur.	Political parties receive no reimbursement for the election expenses they incur.
The Broadcasting Arbitrator determines the allocation of free and paid broadcasting time among registered political parties.	Registered political parties are not allocated broadcasting time to advertise during a by-election.
The Chief Electoral Officer submits a report covering the administration of a general election within 90 days after the return of the writs.	The Chief Electoral Officer submits a report 90 days after the end of the year, covering the administration of all by-elections held during that year.

## Referendums

Three federal referendums have been held in Canada since Confederation: in 1898, on whether to prohibit the sale of alcohol; in 1942, on compulsory military service (conscription); and in 1992, on the Charlottetown constitutional accord. Under the *Referendum Act* that came into force just before the 1992 referendum, only questions related to the Constitution of Canada can be asked in a federal referendum.

Federal referendums and elections cannot be held on the same day. The *Referendum Act* allows the Chief Electoral Officer to adapt the *Canada Elections Act* by regulation to apply it to a referendum.

## Calling a Referendum

Before the referendum period officially begins, the Government submits the text of the referendum question<sup>6</sup> to the leader of the official Opposition and to each political party represented by at least 12 members in the House of Commons. After this consultation, which must last a minimum of three days, a notice of a motion for approval of the question is submitted to the House of Commons, which has a maximum of three days to study the text of the question and vote on it. The House of Commons thereafter informs the Senate of the adoption of the motion; the Senate, in turn, has three days to vote on it.

The referendum period starts officially on the day when the text of the referendum question is approved by the Senate, and it ends on referendum day. When the text of the question is approved, the Governor General, acting on the advice of Cabinet, has 45 days to issue the proclamation to submit the question to electors, specifying whether it will be put to all Canadian electors or only to those of one or more provinces or territories. As soon as the proclamation is issued, the Chief Electoral Officer issues writs of referendum to the appropriate returning officers, instructing them to conduct a referendum. As with general elections, polling day in a referendum cannot be earlier than the 36th day after the writs are issued.

The Chief Electoral Officer must inform the public of the referendum question and the manner in which the referendum will be conducted. However, he may not inform the public or answer public inquiries about arguments in support of or in opposition to the Yes or No options.

The Chief Electoral Officer must also make the text of the question available in the Aboriginal languages selected after consultation with representatives of Aboriginal groups. In the 1992 referendum, for example, the question was translated into 37 of the 53 Aboriginal languages used in Canada.

## Referendum Committees and Advertising

The *Referendum Act* defines a “referendum committee” as any person who, or group that, intends to incur referendum expenses of over \$5,000. All referendum committees must register with the Chief Electoral Officer.

In principle, there is no limit to the number of referendum committees. In 1992, for example, 241 referendum committees were established in support of the Yes or No options.

Referendum committees may advertise to support or oppose one side or the other of the referendum issue, but must identify themselves as sponsors in their advertising. Like political parties in an election, registered referendum committees may apply to the Broadcasting Arbitrator for free broadcasting time. The Broadcasting Arbitrator allocates the broadcasting time available among the registered committees so that the time is allocated equally to committees that support the referendum question and committees that oppose it.

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<sup>6</sup> More than one question can be asked in the same referendum.

Committees also have the right to appoint one agent to be present at each polling station on referendum day. They must report their contributions and expenses to the Chief Electoral Officer, providing the names of all persons, entities or groups that contributed more than \$250. Referendum committees are not eligible for expenses reimbursements.

### Referendum Ballot, 1992

Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992?	YES	<input type="radio"/>	OUI	Acceptez-vous que la Constitution du Canada soit renouvelée sur la base de l'entente conclue le 28 août 1992 ?
	NO	<input type="radio"/>	NON	

The referendum ballot shows the referendum question, and the words “Yes” and “No,” in English and French. (By law, the text is also made available in Aboriginal languages.)



# Political Financing

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*How is money regulated throughout federal elections?*

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The *Canada Elections Act* provides a comprehensive framework designed to make the financing of the political system transparent, fair and accessible. The rules and requirements for contributions and election spending are clearly defined.

Disclosure requirements have existed for candidates since the beginning of the 20th century, but the current regime was essentially laid out with the introduction of political party registration in 1970 and the *Election Expenses Act* in 1974. The latter introduced limits on election expenses for both candidates and political parties as well as the first forms of public funding through partial reimbursement of expenses and tax credits for contributions. As of January 1, 2004, the scope of the legislation was extended to electoral district associations, nomination contestants and leadership contestants.

Limits on contributions adopted in 2003 became effective in January 2004. Further restrictions were imposed as of January 1, 2007; consequently, corporations and trade unions are no longer allowed to make political contributions.

Transparency measures and limits have also been imposed on election advertising by third parties – persons or groups who are not candidates, registered parties or electoral district associations of a registered party. The principles of transparency and fairness thus apply to all participants in the electoral process.

## Contribution Limits

Major changes to the political financing regime that came into effect in 2004 and 2007 set limits on political contributions (adjusted annually for inflation). The most important, indexed as of 2012, are as follows:

- A citizen or permanent resident of Canada can give up to \$1,200 each year in total to each registered political party; up to \$1,200 each year in total to the registered electoral district associations, nomination contestants and candidates of each registered party; up to \$1,200 in total to the leadership contestants of a registered party in a particular contest; and up to \$1,200 for a particular election to each candidate who is not endorsed by a registered party.
- Corporations and trade unions may not make contributions to political entities.

## Contribution Limits\*

Political Entities	Citizens and Permanent Residents Only
Political parties	A maximum of \$1,200 per calendar year to each of the registered political parties
Electoral district associations	A maximum of \$1,200 per year, in the aggregate, to the registered electoral district associations, nomination contestants and candidates of each of the registered political parties
Nomination contestants	
Party-endorsed candidates	
Independent candidates	A maximum of \$1,200 per election to each independent candidate
Leadership contestants	A maximum of \$1,200, in the aggregate, to all of the contestants in a leadership contest

\*These numbers, adjusted annually for inflation, are the limits for 2012–2013. Future adjustments will be posted on the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

## Tax Credits for Political Contributions

Although contributions can take the form of money, goods or services, only a contribution of money to a registered political party, a provincial division of a registered party, a registered electoral district association or a candidate qualifies for an income tax credit under the *Income Tax Act*. According to a Canada Revenue Agency interpretation, a monetary contribution to a candidate is eligible for a credit only if it is received between the date that the candidate's nomination is confirmed by the returning officer and 30 days after election day.

### Tax Credits

Contribution	Tax Credit
\$0.01 to \$400	75 percent
\$400.01 to \$750	\$300 plus 50 percent of the amount by which the contribution exceeds \$400
\$750.01 and over	The lesser of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$475 plus 33 1/3 percent of the amount by which the total exceeds \$750; and</li> <li>• \$650</li> </ul>

## Expenses Limits

The *Canada Elections Act* defines an election expense as any cost incurred, or non-monetary contribution received, by a registered party or a candidate that is used to directly promote or oppose a registered party, its leader or a candidate during an election period. Such expenses are subject to limits for candidates and registered political parties, and these limits are calculated according to a formula based on the number of names on the preliminary or revised lists of electors for each electoral district. (For a party, the electoral districts are those in which the party has endorsed confirmed candidates.) Electoral district associations cannot spend on election advertising during an election.

### Expenses Limits in the 2011 General Election

During the 41st general election, the election expenses limits for political parties ranged from \$62,702 to \$21,025,793, depending on the number of electoral districts in which each party endorsed candidates.

The limits for candidates varied from \$69,635 in the electoral district of Malpeque, Prince Edward Island, to \$134,352 in Oak Ridges–Markham, Ontario.

Expenses limits are also calculated for nomination campaigns. The *Canada Elections Act* defines a nomination campaign expense as an expense reasonably incurred by or on behalf of a nomination contestant during a nomination contest as an incidence of the contest. For a nomination campaign, a nomination contestant can spend 20 percent of the amount allowed for a candidate's election expenses in the same riding during the previous general election.

The *Canada Elections Act* does not set limits on the amount of leadership campaign expenses that each contestant may incur. A registered party may set its own limits by internal rules, but such limits are not enforceable through the Act.

Third parties are limited in the amount that they can spend on election advertising. The third party election advertising limit during the 2011 general election was \$188,250 nationally, with a maximum of \$3,765 per electoral district.

## Reporting

Each electoral participant or political entity must submit financial reports to the Chief Electoral Officer.

- **Registered political parties:** An audited statement of assets and liabilities within six months of registration, an audited annual return, quarterly reports for parties receiving allowances and an audited report on election expenses within six months of election day.
- **Registered electoral district associations:** A statement of assets and liabilities within six months of registration and an annual fiscal return (with an auditor's report if the association received contributions or incurred expenses of \$5,000 or more in the fiscal period).
- **Candidates:** An audited electoral campaign return within four months of election day.

- **Nomination contestants:** A campaign return within four months of the selection date (or election day in some circumstances) if the contestant received contributions or incurred expenses of \$1,000 or more (with an auditor's report if the contestant received contributions or incurred expenses of \$10,000 or more).
- **Leadership contestants:** A report of contributions received prior to applying for registration as a contestant, provided on registration; four interim weekly reports on contributions and other sources of funds, the first of which covers the period from the first day of the contest through to the day that is four weeks before the end of the leadership contest and the subsequent three covering each of the next three weeks; and a final report on all contributions, other sources of funds and expenses (with an auditor's report if the contestant received contributions or incurred campaign expenses of \$5,000 or more) six months after the end of the contest.
- **Third parties:** A report on election advertising expenses within four months of election day (with an auditor's report if advertising expenses of \$5,000 or more are incurred).

The names and addresses of those contributors whose contributions exceeded \$200 must also be reported to the Chief Electoral Officer. All financial reports are published on the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

## Reporting Schedule

Entity	Return	Deadline	Requirement
Political party	• Statement of assets and liabilities	• Six months after registration	• Mandatory
	• Quarterly return	• 30 days after the end of the quarter	• Mandatory (if eligible for quarterly allowances)
	• Financial transactions return	• June 30 each year	• Mandatory
	• General election expenses return	• Six months after the election	• Mandatory
Registered electoral district association	• Statement of assets and liabilities	• Six months after registration	• Mandatory
	• Financial transactions return	• May 31 each year	• Mandatory
Candidate	• Electoral campaign return	• Four months after the election	• Mandatory
Nomination contestant	• Nomination campaign return	• Four months after selection date (or election day in certain circumstances)	• Only when \$1,000 or more in contributions received or nomination campaign expenses incurred
Leadership contestant	• Report on contributions	• On registration	• Mandatory
	• Interim report on contributions and other sources of funds	• Due one week after the reporting period	• Mandatory
	• Weekly leadership campaign return	• Due one week after the end of the reporting period	• Mandatory
	• Leadership campaign return	• Six months after end of contest	• Mandatory
Third party	• Election advertising report	• Four months after election day	• Only when \$500 or more in election advertising expense incurred

## **Reimbursements for Candidates**

A candidate who is elected or receives at least 10 percent of the valid votes cast in his or her electoral district, complies with the financial reporting provisions and submits an auditor's report is entitled to a reimbursement of election and personal expenses paid, up to a maximum of 60 percent of the election expenses limit established for the riding. This reimbursement is publicly funded. Once a candidate has complied with the requirements for filing his or her electoral campaign return, and has accounted for all prenumbered income tax receipts optionally received at the beginning of the election period, the nomination deposit of \$1,000 is also returned.

All candidates also receive an audit subsidy equal to three percent of election expenses (with a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$1,500). The subsidy is paid directly to a candidate's auditor.

## **Reimbursements and Allowances for Political Parties**

Registered parties become eligible for a reimbursement of 50 percent of their paid election expenses for general elections if they file the proper financial reports and receive at least 2 percent of the valid votes cast nationally or 5 percent of the valid votes cast in electoral districts where they endorsed candidates.

Registered parties are also eligible to receive publicly funded quarterly allowances once they have filed the proper financial reports and obtained the minimum threshold of valid votes described above. The allowances are based on the number of valid votes each party received at the most recent general election. Legislative amendments passed in 2011 are phasing out the payments. The allowances began to be reduced on April 1, 2012, and will stop completely as of April 1, 2015.

## **Audit Subsidy for Registered Electoral District Associations**

Registered electoral district associations that incur expenses or accept contributions of \$5,000 or more are eligible to receive an audit subsidy of up to \$1,500 of the auditor's invoiced amount.

## **Regulation of Third Parties**

The *Canada Elections Act* regulates third parties that engage in election advertising. A third party can be a person or a group, other than a candidate, registered political party or registered electoral district associations of a registered party. A "group" is defined as an unincorporated trade union, trade association or other group of persons acting together by mutual consent for a common purpose.

Election advertising is defined as an advertising message transmitted to the public by any means during an election period and that promotes or opposes a registered party or the election of a candidate, including one that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated.

A third party must register with the Chief Electoral Officer as soon as it spends \$500 or more on election advertising. Even if it is not required to register, any election advertising must identify the third party and state that it has authorized the advertisement.

A registered third party must report its election advertising expenses within four months of election day. Third parties that incur \$5,000 or more on election advertising must include an auditor's report on their return. Among other information, the return must include the name and address of any contributor who gave a total of more than \$200 for election advertising in the period starting six months before the election was called and ending on election day.



## Further Information

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Elections Canada publishes a broad range of information on the Canadian federal electoral process, including educational and plain-text materials. Most of our publications are available online in HTML, PDF or database format. Some are also available in print or CD-ROM format, and some (mainly electoral maps and other election documents) are available for purchase.

For a complete list of publications available from Elections Canada, see the Resource Centre section of our website or contact us by mail, telephone or fax.

**Mail** Elections Canada  
257 Slater Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0M6

**Telephone** 1-800-463-6868  
toll-free in Canada and the United States  
  
001-800-514-6868  
toll-free in Mexico  
  
613-993-2975  
from anywhere in the world  
  
For persons who are deaf or hard of hearing:  
TTY 1-800-361-8935  
toll-free in Canada and the United States

**Fax** 613-954-8584  
1-888-524-1444  
toll-free in Canada and the United States

**Website** [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)



# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Evolution of the Federal Electoral System

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*What are the milestones in the history of the Canadian electoral system?*

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The following is an overview of selected key dates and important milestones in the evolution of the federal electoral system. Please consult *A History of the Vote in Canada* (second edition, available at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)) for a much more detailed analysis, including a timeline of historical events starting in the early years of the colonial era.

- 1867** In the first general election after Confederation in 1867, only a small minority of the population, composed largely of male British subjects with real property of a certain value, can vote in a country that has just four provinces, represented by 181 members of Parliament.
- 1874** The *Dominion Elections Act* brings in the use of the secret ballot and the practice of holding a general election on the same day in all electoral districts. Candidates are required to report their election expenses, but no enforcement mechanisms are provided.
- 1885** Parliament draws up a complicated federal franchise based on property ownership. The rules differ from town to town and from province to province.
- 1898** The Government returns control of the right to vote in federal elections to the provinces.
- 1908** Direct contributions from corporations to candidates are prohibited, but since the law does not recognize political parties, and without any requirements to disclose the source of political contributions, this principle remains unenforceable.
- 1915** The right to vote is granted to military personnel on active service. The First World War brings other important changes to the federal franchise.
- 1917** Parliament once more takes over responsibility for preparing the voters lists, through the *War-time Elections Act* and the *Military Voters Act*. The right to vote is extended to all British subjects, women and men, who are active or retired members of the armed forces, including persons with Indian status and persons less than 21 years of age, independent of any residency requirement.
- 1918** The franchise in federal elections is extended to women 21 years of age or over.
- 1919** Women become eligible for election to the House of Commons.

**1920** The *Dominion Elections Act* restores control of the right to vote in federal elections to the federal government. The Act also creates the office of Chief Electoral Officer of Canada and establishes advance voting for certain categories of voters.

Other legislative changes include a new requirement for candidates to disclose the names of their contributors and the amount of the contributions they receive; candidates' financial officers must submit a report on spending within two months following the day of the vote, and there is a \$500 fine for failing to submit it. Returning officers must publish a summary of these reports in local newspapers.

The prohibition on corporations making contributions is extended to all companies and associations, whether or not they are incorporated.

**1929** A legislative amendment establishes Monday as federal election day.

**1930** The Government of R.B. Bennett introduces a permanent list of electors in an effort to replace enumeration, but abandons the approach after one election as impractical and expensive. The restrictions on contributions from corporations are abandoned.

**1948** The last of the property ownership requirements for voting are abolished, and the right to vote is extended to all Canadians of Asian origin.

**1950** Inuit people obtain the right to vote.

**1955** The last vestiges of religious restrictions on the franchise are abolished.

**1960** Status Indians are no longer required to give up their status to vote in federal elections. The right to vote at advance polls is extended to all Canadians absent from their polling divisions on election day.

**1964** The *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* receives royal assent and entrusts the redistribution of electoral boundaries to independent boundary commissions. Redistribution remains a 10-year exercise, as set out in the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

**1970** The voting age and the age of candidacy are lowered from 21 to 18 years. Public servants – mainly diplomats – and their dependants posted outside Canada become eligible to use the Special Voting Rules, previously available only to military personnel and their dependants.

Political parties are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer to obtain the right to have their names printed on the ballot paper under the names of their candidates. To be eligible for registration, political parties must endorse candidates in at least 50 ridings in a general election and present at least 100 signatures of electors who are members of the party.

**1974** The *Election Expenses Act* introduces a comprehensive set of controls over election expenses and financing. The legislation sets spending limits for candidates and requires public disclosure of all contributions exceeding \$100 to political parties and candidates.

Public funding measures are introduced through partial reimbursement of election expenses, tax credits for political contributions and the allocation of free broadcasting time among political parties. To enforce these provisions, the Act also creates the position of Commissioner of Election Expenses. Third party election advertising is prohibited.

- 1977** A legislative amendment broadens the mandate of the Commissioner of Election Expenses, who becomes the Commissioner of Canada Elections, responsible for the enforcement of all provisions of the *Canada Elections Act*.
- 1982** The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* defines constitutional rights and freedoms, including the freedom of opinion and expression, the universal right to vote and be a candidate in a legislative election, and the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. These rights and freedoms are subject only to reasonable limits, prescribed by law, that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.
- 1983** The ban on third party advertising is lifted, but restrictions apply on allowable expenses. With respect to candidate election expenses, every person, other than a candidate or an official agent, who incurs election expenses becomes guilty of an offence under the *Canada Elections Act*.
- 1992** The *Referendum Act* is passed to provide a legal and administrative framework for conducting federal referendums on any question related to the Constitution of Canada.

Parliament passes amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* to improve access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities. These include requirements for mobile polls at institutions where seniors or persons with disabilities reside; level access at all ordinary polling stations and, where this is not possible, the use of transfer certificates; and a template for use by electors with a visual impairment.

- 1993** Parliament passes legislation to allow inmates serving sentences of less than two years to vote. The right to vote is also extended to judges and persons with a mental disability.

The *Canada Elections Act* is also modified to allow Canadians to vote by special ballot if they cannot go to their ordinary or advance polls. The ballot can be used by students away from home, travelling vacationers and business people as well as those temporarily residing outside the country (for less than five years).

Other changes authorize registration at urban polls on election day (previously allowed only for rural voters), shorten the minimum election period from 50 to 47 days and ban the publication and broadcasting of opinion polls during the last three days of a campaign. In addition, a cap of \$1,000 is imposed on a third party's election advertising.

- 1996** Amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* introduce a permanent register of electors and eliminate door-to-door enumeration for federal general elections, by-elections and referendums. The general election and by-election period is shortened from a minimum

of 47 days to 36. Voting hours on election day are staggered and extended so that most of the results are available at approximately the same time across the country.

- 2000** A new *Canada Elections Act* modernizes the organization and terminology of electoral legislation. It also introduces new controls on election advertising by third parties.

The new Act prohibits election advertising and the publication of new election opinion-poll results on election day. It also authorizes the Commissioner of Canada Elections to enter into compliance agreements and, where necessary, obtain court injunctions during an election period. The Act also mandates the Chief Electoral Officer to develop and test electronic voting procedures. Third parties are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer and disclose their election advertising expenses.

- 2001** Further to a court case, the number of confirmed candidates required for an unregistered political party to be entitled to have its name on the ballot is reduced from 50 to 12.

- 2004** Legislative amendments bring significant and comprehensive changes to the rules regulating political financing. They introduce limits on political contributions by individuals and, henceforth, prohibit corporations and trade unions from contributing to registered parties or leadership contestants. The expenses of nomination contestants are capped. Registration requirements are extended to leadership contestants and electoral district associations. Financial reporting rules are extended to apply to all electoral district associations, leadership contestants and nomination contestants governed by the Act. Registered political parties that obtain a certain number of valid votes, nationwide or at the riding level, become eligible for quarterly public allowances. Tax credits for political contributions are also augmented.

Subsequently, the law is amended to lower the minimum number of candidates required for party registration from 50 to 1. The new legislation also introduces the first legal definition of a political party, along with a series of new administrative requirements for party registration.

- 2006** Legislative amendments introduced as part of the *Federal Accountability Act* further restrict political contributions and make other changes to the *Canada Elections Act* intended to increase the transparency of the electoral process and better control the influence of money on elections. The Act amends the rules for political contributions, gifts and the use of trust funds, and allows only individuals who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents to make political contributions. It also transfers the process of appointing returning officers from the Governor General, acting on advice of Cabinet, to the Chief Electoral Officer. Returning officers are appointed, based on merit, for a 10-year term. However, if any boundaries of an electoral district change as a result of the redistribution process each decade, a competition is held to appoint a returning officer for the new district.

The Act also brings changes to the prosecution process. First, it changes the deadline within which a prosecution can be initiated, making it no more than 5 years after the Commissioner of Canada Elections became aware of the facts, but in any case no later

than 10 years after the day the offence was committed. Second, prosecutions become the responsibility of the newly created Director of Public Prosecutions, while the Commissioner remains the investigative body for alleged offences under the *Canada Elections Act*.

- 2007** Legislative amendments introduce the requirement for voters to prove their identity and address before being handed a ballot. Further amendments are also made with respect to electors who have no residential or civic address or no way to prove such an address. Three options are made available to electors, including showing one piece of government-issued identification with a photo, name and address; showing two pieces of authorized identification, both of which must bear the elector's name and one of which must also bear the elector's address; or taking an oath and having another elector, whose name appears on the list of electors in the same polling division and who produces proper pieces of identification, vouch for them. An elector can vouch for only one other elector.

Further legislative amendments also introduce a fixed election date for federal elections. According to that legislation, if an election is not called under the constitutional prerogative of the Governor General or as a result of a government losing the confidence of the House of Commons, a general election must be held on the third Monday of October in the fourth calendar year following polling day for the previous general election. The next fixed election date is Monday, October 19, 2015.

- 2011** Legislative amendments are set to phase out the quarterly per-vote public allowances paid to registered political parties who attain a certain number of votes, nationwide or at the riding level, in the previous general election. These transfer payments made by Elections Canada are reduced starting on April 1, 2012, and stop completely as of April 1, 2015.

The *Fair Representation Act* amends the rules in the *Constitution Act, 1867* for readjusting the number of members of the House of Commons and consequently changes the representation of the provinces in that House. The application of the new formula adds seats in the three provinces with the fastest-growing populations. It gives Ontario 15 more seats, while British Columbia and Alberta are each allotted an additional six. The amendments also include a new "representation rule" that applies in cases where the new calculation method would leave a province under-represented. Such a province's seat allocation is instead increased so that its share of representation will equal its share of the population. As a result, Quebec receives three more seats. The new seat total for all of Canada is 338.

The new Act also shortens the time allotted to conduct the process of readjusting the electoral boundaries. As well, it allows the reappointment of returning officers for a new term in cases where the position becomes vacant because electoral district boundaries are revised.

## Appendix 2: Distribution of House of Commons Seats, 1867–2013\*

Year	Can.	N.B.	N.S.	Ont.	Que.	Man.	B.C.	P.E.I.	Alta.	Sask.	N.W.T.	Y.T.	Nun.
1867	181	15	19	82	65								
1871	185	15	19	82	65	4							
1872	200	16	21	88	65	4	6						
1873	206	16	21	88	65	4	6	6					
1882	211	16	21	92	65	5	6	6			N.W.T.		
1887	215	16	21	92	65	5	6	6			4		
1892	213	14	20	92	65	7	6	5			4		Y.T.
1903	214	13	18	86	65	10	7	4			10		1
											Alta.	Sask.	N.W.T. / Y.T.
1907	221	13	18	86	65	10	7	4	7	10			1
1914	234	11	16	82	65	15	13	3	12	16			1
1915	235	11	16	82	65	15	13	4	12	16			1
1924	245	11	14	82	65	17	14	4	16	21			1
1933	245	10	12	82	65	17	16	4	17	21			1
1947	255	10	13	83	73	16	18	4	17	20			1
1949	262	10	13	83	73	16	18	4	17	20			1
													N.L.
													7
											N.W.T.	Y.T.	
											.		
1952	265	10	12	85	75	14	22	4	17	17	1	1	7
1966	264	10	11	88	74	13	23	4	19	13	1	1	7
1976	282	10	11	95	75	14	28	4	21	14	2	1	7
1987	295	10	11	99	75	14	32	4	26	14	2	1	7
1996	301	10	11	103	75	14	34	4	26	14	2	1	7
2003	308	10	11	106	75	14	36	4	28	14	1	1	7
2013*	338	10	11	121	78	14	42	4	34	14	1	1	7
													Nun.
													1
													1

\*The current redistribution of federal electoral districts is projected to conclude in 2013 with a new representation order. The most recent representation order was made in 2003.

### Appendix 3: Canadian Parliaments Since 1867

Parliament	Date the writs were issued	Election date	Dissolution date	Duration (years)	Political party in power	Seats (won/total)
1st	August 6, 1867	Aug. 7–Sept. 20, 1867	July 8, 1872	4.9	Liberal-Conservative	101/181
2nd	July 15, 1872	Jul. 20–Oct. 12, 1872	January 2, 1874	1.5	Liberal-Conservative	103/200
3rd	January 2, 1874	January 22, 1874	August 17, 1878	4.6	Liberal	133/206
4th	August 17, 1878	September 17, 1878	May 18, 1882	3.7	Liberal-Conservative	137/206
5th	May 18, 1882	June 20, 1882	January 15, 1887	4.6	Liberal-Conservative	139/210
6th	January 17, 1887	February 22, 1887	February 3, 1891	4.0	Liberal-Conservative	123/215
7th	February 4, 1891	March 5, 1891	April 24, 1896	5.1	Liberal-Conservative	123/215
8th	April 24, 1896	June 23, 1896	October 9, 1900	4.3	Liberal	118/213
9th	October 9, 1900	November 7, 1900	September 29, 1904	3.9	Liberal	132/213
10th	September 29, 1904	November 3, 1904	September 17, 1908	3.9	Liberal	139/214
11th	September 18, 1908	October 26, 1908	July 29, 1911	2.8	Liberal	133/221
12th	August 3, 1911	September 21, 1911	October 6, 1917	6.0	Conservative	133/221
13th	October 31, 1917	December 17, 1917	October 4, 1921	3.8	Unionist	153/235
14th	October 8, 1921	December 6, 1921	September 5, 1925	3.6	Liberal	118/235*
15th	September 5, 1925	October 29, 1925	July 2, 1926	0.6	Liberal	115/245*
16th	July 20, 1926	September 14, 1926	May 30, 1930	3.7	Liberal	125/245
17th	May 30, 1930	July 28, 1930	August 14, 1935	5.1	Conservative	137/245
18th	August 15, 1935	October 14, 1935	January 25, 1940	4.3	Liberal	173/245
19th	January 27, 1940	March 26, 1940	April 16, 1945	5.1	Liberal	181/245
20th	April 16, 1945	June 11, 1945	April 30, 1949	3.9	Liberal	125/245
21st	April 30, 1949	June 27, 1949	June 13, 1953	4.0	Liberal	190/262
22nd	June 13, 1953	August 10, 1953	April 12, 1957	3.7	Liberal	171/265
23rd	April 12, 1957	June 10, 1957	February 1, 1958	0.5	Progressive Conservative	111/265*
24th	February 1, 1958	March 31, 1958	April 19, 1962	4.1	Progressive Conservative	208/265
25th	April 19, 1962	June 18, 1962	February 6, 1963	0.6	Progressive Conservative	116/265*

Parliament	Date the writs were issued	Election date	Dissolution date	Duration (years)	Political party in power	Seats (won/total)
26th	February 6, 1963	April 8, 1963	September 8, 1965	2.3	Liberal	128/265*
27th	September 8, 1965	November 8, 1965	April 23, 1968	2.4	Liberal	131/265*
28th	April 25, 1968	June 25, 1968	September 1, 1972	4.2	Liberal	155/264
29th	September 1, 1972	October 30, 1972	May 9, 1974	1.5	Liberal	109/265*
30th	May 9, 1974	July 8, 1974	March 26, 1979	4.7	Liberal	141/264
31st	March 26, 1979	May 22, 1979	December 14, 1979	0.5	Progressive Conservative	136/282*
32nd	December 14, 1979	February 18, 1980	July 9, 1984	4.4	Liberal	147/282
33rd	July 9, 1984	September 4, 1984	October 1, 1988	4.1	Progressive Conservative	211/282
34th	October 1, 1988	November 21, 1988	September 8, 1993	4.8	Progressive Conservative	169/295
35th	September 8, 1993	October 25, 1993	April 27, 1997	3.5	Liberal	177/295
36th	April 27, 1997	June 2, 1997	October 22, 2000	3.4	Liberal	155/301
37th	October 22, 2000	November 27, 2000	May 23, 2004	3.5	Liberal	172/301
38th	May 23, 2004	June 28, 2004	November 29, 2005	1.4	Liberal	135/308*
39th	November 29, 2005	January 23, 2006	September 7, 2008	2.6	Conservative	124/308*
40th	September 7, 2008	October 14, 2008	March 26, 2011	2.4	Conservative	143/308*
41st	March 26, 2011	May 2, 2011			Conservative	166/308
<b>Average</b>				<b>3.4</b>		

\*Denotes a minority government.

## Appendix 4: Canadian Prime Ministers Since 1867

Prime Minister	Political party	Period in office	
		From	To
1. John A. Macdonald	Liberal-Conservative	July 1, 1867	November 5, 1873
2. Alexander Mackenzie	Liberal	November 7, 1873	October 8, 1878
3. John A. Macdonald	Liberal-Conservative	October 17, 1878	June 6, 1891
4. John J. C. Abbott	Liberal-Conservative	June 16, 1891	November 24, 1892
5. John S. D. Thompson	Liberal-Conservative	December 5, 1892	December 12, 1894
6. Mackenzie Bowell	Liberal-Conservative	December 21, 1894	April 27, 1896
7. Charles Tupper	Liberal-Conservative	May 1, 1896	July 8, 1896
8. Wilfrid Laurier	Liberal	July 11, 1896	October 6, 1911
9. Robert Laird Borden	Conservative	October 10, 1911	October 12, 1917
10. Robert Laird Borden	Unionist (coalition government)	October 12, 1917	July 10, 1920
11. Arthur Meighen	Unionist (National Liberal and Conservative)	July 10, 1920	December 29, 1921
12. William L. Mackenzie King	Liberal	December 29, 1921	June 28, 1926
13. Arthur Meighen	Conservative	June 29, 1926	September 25, 1926
14. William L. Mackenzie King	Liberal	September 25, 1926	August, 7, 1930
15. Richard Bedford Bennett	Conservative	August 7, 1930	October 23, 1935
16. William L. Mackenzie King	Liberal	October 23, 1935	November 15, 1948
17. Louis Stephen St-Laurent	Liberal	November 15, 1948	June 21, 1957
18. John George Diefenbaker	Progressive Conservative	June 21, 1957	April 22, 1963
19. Lester Bowles Pearson	Liberal	April 22, 1963	April 20, 1968
20. Pierre Elliott Trudeau	Liberal	April 20, 1968	June 3, 1979
21. Joseph Clark	Progressive Conservative	June 4, 1979	March 2, 1980
22. Pierre Elliott Trudeau	Liberal	March 3, 1980	June 30, 1984
23. John Napier Turner	Liberal	June 30, 1984	September 17, 1984
24. Brian Mulroney	Progressive Conservative	September 17, 1984	June 25, 1993
25. Kim Campbell	Progressive Conservative	June 25, 1993	November 4, 1993
26. Jean Chrétien	Liberal	November 4, 1993	December 12, 2003
27. Paul Martin	Liberal	December 12, 2003	February 6, 2006
28. Stephen Harper	Conservative	February 6, 2006	–

## Appendix 5: Statistics on Voter Turnout in Canada Since 1867

Date of electoral event	Population <sup>1</sup>	Electors on lists	Ballots cast	Voter turnout (%) <sup>2</sup>
1867 (August 7–September 20) <sup>3</sup>	3,230,000	361,028	268,387	73.1
1872 (July 20–October 12)	3,689,000	426,974	318,329	70.3
1874 (January 22)	3,689,000	432,410	324,006	69.6
1878 (September 17)	3,689,000	715,279	534,029	69.1
1882 (June 20)	4,325,000	663,873	508,496	70.3
1887 (February 22)	4,325,000	948,222	724,517	70.1
1891 (March 5)	4,833,000	1,113,140	778,495	64.4
1896 (June 23)	4,833,000	1,358,328	912,992	62.9
1898 (September 29) <sup>4</sup>	4,833,000	1,236,419	551,405	44.6
1900 (November 7)	4,833,000	1,167,402	958,497	77.4
1904 (November 3)	5,371,000	1,385,440	1,036,878	71.6
1908 (October 26)	5,371,000	1,463,591	1,180,820	70.3
1911 (September 21)	7,204,527	1,820,742	1,314,953	70.2
1917 (December 17)	7,591,971	2,093,799	1,892,741	75.0
1921 (December 6)	8,760,211	4,435,310	3,139,306	67.7
1925 (October 29)	8,776,352	4,608,636	3,168,412	66.4
1926 (September 14)	8,887,952	4,665,381	3,273,062	67.7
1930 (July 28)	8,887,952	5,153,971	3,922,481	73.5
1935 (October 14)	10,367,063	5,918,207	4,452,675	74.2
1940 (March 26)	10,429,169	6,588,888	4,672,531	69.9
1942 (April 27) <sup>4</sup>	11,494,627	6,502,234	4,638,847	71.3
1945 (June 11)	11,494,627	6,952,445	5,305,193	75.3
1949 (June 27)	11,823,649	7,893,629	5,903,572	73.8
1953 (August 10)	14,003,704	8,401,691	5,701,963	67.5
1957 (June 10)	16,073,970	8,902,125	6,680,690	74.1
1958 (March 31)	16,073,970	9,131,200	7,357,139	79.4
1962 (June 18)	18,238,247	9,700,325	7,772,656	79.0
1963 (April 8)	18,238,247	9,910,757	7,958,636	79.2
1965 (November 8)	18,238,247	10,274,904	7,796,728	74.8

Date of electoral event	Population <sup>1</sup>	Electors on lists	Ballots cast	Voter turnout (%) <sup>2</sup>
1968 (June 25)	20,014,880	10,860,888	8,217,916	75.7
1972 (October 30)	21,568,311	13,000,778	9,974,661	76.7
1974 (July 8)	21,568,311	13,620,353	9,671,002	71.0
1979 (May 22)	22,992,604	15,233,653	11,541,000	75.7
1980 (February 18)	22,992,604	15,890,416	11,015,514	69.3
1984 (September 4)	24,343,181	16,774,941	12,638,424	75.3
1988 (November 21)	25,309,331	17,639,001	13,281,191	75.3
1992 (October 26) <sup>4,5</sup>	20,400,896	13,725,966	9,855,978	71.8
1993 (October 25)	27,296,859	19,906,796	13,863,135	69.7 <sup>6</sup>
1997 (June 2)	27,296,859	19,663,478	13,174,698	67.0
2000 (November 27)	28,846,761	21,243,473	12,997,185	61.2 <sup>7</sup>
2004 (June 28)	30,007,094	22,466,621	13,683,570	60.9
2006 (January 23)	30,007,094	23,054,615	14,908,703	64.7
2008 (October 14)	31,612,897	23,677,639	13,929,093	58.8
2011 (May 2)	31,612,897	24,257,592	14,823,408	61.1

<sup>1</sup> As of the most recent Census of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Generally, percentages are calculated based on the number of registered electors. However, presenting these figures involves several challenges, in part because official election results since Confederation have not been reported consistently and in part because of variations in the electoral system itself. For instance, in the case of an election by acclamation, the number of registered electors on the lists for that electoral district was not always included in the total number of registered electors. In other cases, lists of electors were not prepared for some districts, and even for Prince Edward Island as a whole, for several elections. Moreover, until 1966, a number of electoral districts were dual-member constituencies. Because each elector could vote for more than one candidate, the reported number of votes cast (valid and rejected ballots together) was higher than it would have been in a single-member scenario. In these cases, the total number of votes was divided by the number of members elected.

<sup>3</sup> In early elections, polling took place over several weeks or even months.

<sup>4</sup> This was a referendum.

<sup>5</sup> Does not include Quebec, which conducted its own referendum based on provincial legislation.

<sup>6</sup> This percentage rises to 70.9 when the number of electors on the lists is adjusted to account for electors who had moved or died between the enumeration for the 1992 referendum and the election of 1993, for which a separate enumeration was not carried out (except in Quebec because the 1992 electoral lists were reused).

<sup>7</sup> This percentage was adjusted to arrive at the final turnout of 64.1 percent after the National Register of Electors was updated to remove the names of deceased electors and duplicates arising from moves.

Sources: Reports of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery (1867–1917); reports of the Chief Electoral Officer (1921–2009); unpublished summary data prepared by Elections Canada; R. Pomfret, *The Economic Development of Canada* (1987); H. A. Scarrow, *Canada Votes* (1962); *Contact* (1985).