



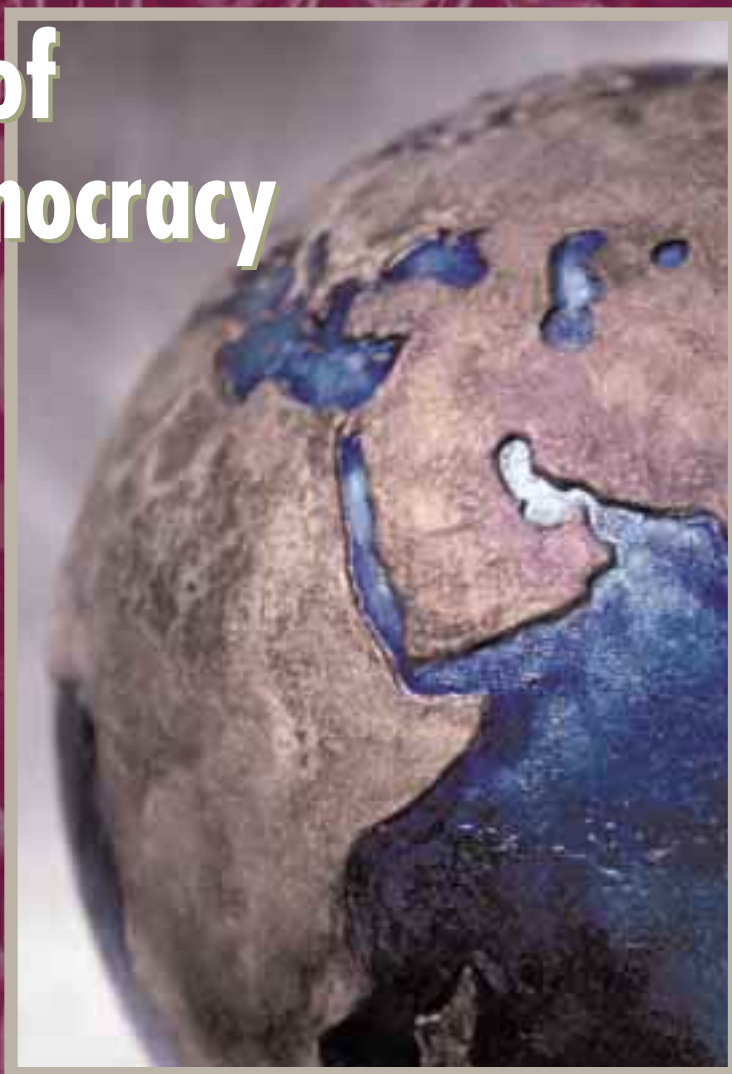
# ELECTORAL Insight

A MAGAZINE PRODUCED BY ELECTIONS CANADA TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN ELECTORAL MATTERS

## New Ways of Building Democracy

**Voter Turnout  
in Canada**

**Agnes Macphail:  
Canada's first  
Woman Member  
of Parliament**



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*The Vote* (1979-1980)

Indiana limestone, 121.9 x 182.8 cm, House of Commons, Ottawa

The base stone of *The Vote*, a sculpture on the east wall of the House of Commons chamber, shows four heads with flowing hair whose mouths shape, in song, the first syllables of Canada's national anthem, "O-Ca-na-da".

*Electoral Insight* is prepared by Elections Canada and is published biannually. *Electoral Insight* is intended for those interested in electoral and related matters, including parliamentarians, officials of international and domestic electoral management bodies, election officers and academics. The opinions expressed are those of the authors; they do not necessarily reflect those of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

Submissions of articles and photos that might be of interest to *Electoral Insight* readers are welcome, although publication cannot be guaranteed. If used, submissions will be edited for length and clarity as necessary.

Please address all contributions and letters to the Editor, *Electoral Insight*, Elections Canada, 257 Slater St., Ottawa, Canada K1A 0M6.

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Jean-Pierre Kingsley  
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

## New Ways of Building Democracy

For many years, Canadians have been involved as respected participants in the elections of emerging democracies around the world. Our original priority to help introduce democracy through the electoral process has changed. Many formerly authoritarian states now regularly hold democratic elections. Reflecting this evolution, our involvement now focuses on expanding and consolidating democratic processes and institutions in countries that have already experienced their first elections. Our goal has now become to support emerging democracies move towards self-sufficiency in electoral matters.

Many bilateral and multilateral partnerships between Elections Canada and the election agencies of other nations, as well as international electoral organizations have resulted. These partnerships are mutually beneficial to Canada, as well as to other countries.

The second edition of *Electoral Insight* explores various aspects of the democratization process. It examines Elections Canada's current international involvement, particularly through the Partnership for Electoral and Democratic Development (PEDD), which was created earlier this year. This international co-operation project aims at targeted institutional development and more focused bilateral and multilateral activities. As well, international organizations along with Elections Canada, through the ACE Project, have joined forces to provide encyclopedic electoral information on a special Web site, on CD-ROM and in hard copy. Canadians can be proud of their international contributions.

I trust that the articles in this second edition will encourage discussion, as well as sustaining the collaborative spirit that is growing among electoral agencies and our stakeholders and partners. I welcome your comments. ✉

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean-Pierre Kingsley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jean-Pierre Kingsley



# Challenges for Electoral Authorities in New Democracies

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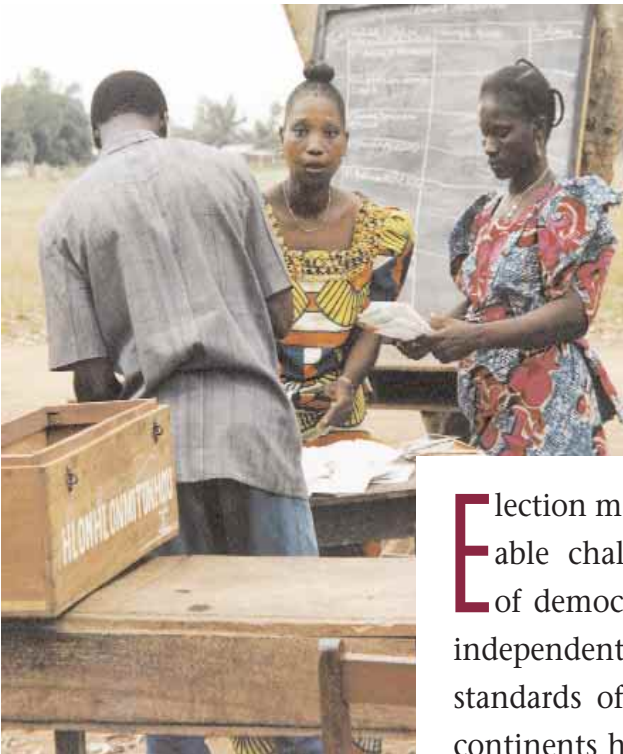


Photo: Dominique Christine Tremblay

Counting the ballots at the 1996 presidential elections in Benin.

Electoral management in new and emerging democracies faces a formidable challenge. The integrity of the franchise at this early stage of democratization must be ensured by electoral authorities that are independent of political parties, and expected to meet international standards of good practice. The spread of multi-party elections across continents has created an unprecedented reality in world politics, which deserves a close look from both analysts and practitioners. It is the aim of this article to further explore this new reality, along the lines of my recent paper, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program, on Electoral Management Bodies as Institutions of Governance.<sup>1</sup>

As highlighted in the concluding statement of a recent international workshop on the subject: *This is a time for democracy. The key element of the democratic process is the periodic holding of free and fair elections, for which the existence of EMBs (Electoral Management Bodies) which are politically legitimate and technically efficient is a necessary condition. As a basic foundation for democracy, elections constitute the most conspicuous means of access by people to the democratic process and the institutions of representative government. Consequently, the presence of adequate EMBs turns out to be crucial for the electoral process to unfold in an inclusive, transparent and accountable manner.*<sup>2</sup>

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## Challenges on Governance

The major question in the heated arena of democratization, today as in the past, is whether safeguarding the franchise should be left in the hands of the executive branch of government alone, or whether pressures and controls from external agents are needed. Historical, as well as current, evidence speaks in favour of the latter scenario. The issue has to do with the fair practice and transparency of universal suffrage. And it seems that this cannot be pursued today in the same way as it was by older democracies during the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century: through the long struggle of democratic forces against all-powerful governments that represented well-entrenched land-owning aristocracies and coalescing industrial-financial oligarchies. The largest part of that struggle took place amid acute social conflict and political turmoil, not excluding civil and international warfare, both in Europe and the U.S. By the end of World War II, among the ripe fruits of a bitter history, suitable conditions existed for elections to be safely run by the Ministry of the Interior, the Home Office, or by sheriffs or other local officials.

The democratization of the “third wave”, and the elections that follow internationally monitored peace agreements after protracted civil conflicts follow a different scenario. For analytical and practical reasons, confusion should be avoided between historical phenomena that have little in common. In the past, we have elections properly run by the executive branch only after a century of conflict and gradually emerging controls from political parties, parliaments, neutral judiciaries and independent media. In contrast, current elections at an early stage of democratization are being held under conditions characterized by fast mobilization of populations, the dawning of the rule of law, weak political parties, and, frequently, not very independent media. It is in this

latter context that electoral agencies are called to play, in the short term, the role that political parties, unions and other advocates of universal suffrage performed in the long term while struggling for the franchise in western Europe, the Americas, India, and other places.

A significant evolutionary trend in the institutional shaping of electoral bodies during the present period of universal democratization is that of elections conducted by electoral authorities with the legal status of independence from the executive branch of government, and with a permanent staff, national headquarters, and offices throughout the country. Historically speaking, elections exclusively managed by the executive branch are a residual category, not only in number, but also as a developmental pattern. Of the 27 most stable democracies in the second half of this century, only seven countries have this type of electoral authority, all of them in northwestern Europe, plus Switzerland, and they constitute 25 percent of all older democracies. A different pattern emerges in the remaining countries, where democracy was established later or where

a transition to democracy is in progress. In this latter group, only one out of five countries has elections run exclusively by the executive branch. In contrast to countries with a longer democratic tradition and a centralized government – that is, countries in continental Europe and former colonies either from the French centralized tradition or in the British Commonwealth – government-run elections are very unlikely in new democracies. Furthermore, electoral

reform in newly democratic societies and in some older democracies almost invariably moves in the direction of establishing, at least in law, independent electoral commissions, either with full responsibility for the electoral process or with supervisory powers over elections run by the executive branch.

From earlier in history to more recent times, elections were at first government-run, both in countries that followed the British common law and in those that followed the Roman–Napoleonic legal tradition. The main difference is that in the Anglo-Saxon world (common law), electoral administration has followed a more decentralized pattern, whereas in the Roman

world (civil law), the central government has retained a higher degree of authority. Elections were traditionally considered a public service. It was the expansion of mass democracy after World War II and the more recent wave of democratization which have put into question the legitimacy of the executive branch playing the role of a “referee” in the competition for power. In this connection, it is not by chance that (a) some democracies as stable as the United States or Australia have estab-

lished independent electoral commissions as recently as the 1970s and 1980s respectively; (b) most of the countries where elections used to be managed by the government have progressively established supervisory bodies with or without representatives of the political parties; and (c) the more recent thrust of change favours the establishment of independent electoral commissions, most often composed of representatives of political parties.



The issue has  
to do with  
the fair  
practice and  
transparency  
of universal  
suffrage.

Although a developmental pattern emerges from historical and more recent experience in electoral administration, it would be naive to expect from the newly established bodies an actual status of political independence and professional expertise. Rather than political miracles, struggle among opposing forces is to be expected. On the one hand, there is the contradiction between the institutional model of electoral administration adopted in law (independent, permanent, and professional) and the real facts of life (varying degrees of independence, permanency and professionalism). On the other hand, there are the different arenas where the proponents of the ideals of independence and permanency compete

with their opponents for the integrity of the franchise. Some elements in the new pattern are the same as in the past, some are different. On the one hand, the path towards independence is full of trouble and travail, since those with political power are unlikely

to welcome willingly external controls wielded by other institutions. There is also pressure from opposing parties to replace incumbents, not to mention blunt attempts at the unfair manipulation of voters, and tampering with ballots. On the other hand, the whole journey could be shorter for these nations, if only because new allies of the franchise have emerged in the global village (i.e. more accessible education, international and domestic monitoring of human rights, timely media exposure, and more peaceful political conditions as the number of democracies keeps growing).

The main challenge at the present time arises precisely from the difficulties – both political and technical – of meeting the ideals of independence and professionalism. How can these ideals actually be achieved? This is first a matter of politics, and only secondly a matter of legal judgment and technical expertise. Independence from the political executive would actually imply adequate legal provisions and also a process that is congenial to them. The coalition of forces striving for freedom and the rule of law should take advantage of the founding stage of the new regime in order to establish a proper institutional structure. Peace agreement negotiations, constitution making and electoral reform would provide the

main opportunities for bargaining and arranging for the necessary legal provisions and material conditions. In this connection, it is crucial that appointment methods be designed that preserve the electoral institution from control by incumbents (usually including a variety of candi-

dates from different sources – the judiciary, political parties – approved by a supermajority in parliament). Also, electoral budgets should come from consolidated funds, and be directly arranged through standing committees of parliament, rather than handled through the ministry; and probably, as is often the case, electoral bodies should be entrenched in the constitution. In addition to the institutional architecture, for the electoral authority, whatever its legal shape, to function fairly, it is necessary that political parties be kept on board. As the main players at elections, parties and

candidates, through their representatives, are politically entitled to direct and permanent contact with the electoral authority. Furthermore, regular contact between the latter and parliamentary committees would also be part of a scenario of transparency and democratic control. Similarly, the guardian of the franchise has the responsibility of and should be capable of enlisting and maintaining wide support among other key actors of the democratic process (i.e. the media, unions, churches, and human rights organizations).

## Management Challenges

Some important questions at the managerial/technical level of electoral bodies are these: how extensive a bureaucratic organization is required for effective and efficient conduct of the polls? Which would be more suitable, a centralized or decentralized organization? How can elections be made cost-effective? What is the role of new technologies in election management? Although these obviously cannot be discussed at length within the scope of this article, I will offer some arguments that have been further elaborated in my above-noted paper.

First, on bureaucracy: it is not as important to have a large organization as it is to have an administrative machine that is adequate to the political, geographic, and financial circumstances of the country. Less debatable is the question of permanence and professionalism (endurance, standardized recruitment and training procedures, etc.). The maintenance of a civil service type of organization has historically proved more effective and efficient than ad hoc bodies in practically all fields of collective services involving large populations and the massive use of resources. How could it be different with elections? Experience has shown that permanent electoral bodies staffed by civil servants, even without much high-technology



*The ballot used at the 1990 presidential election in Haiti.*

equipment, can operate at acceptable levels of efficacy and efficiency. The argument can be illustrated in countries like Botswana, India, Chile and Uruguay, where the electoral agencies have efficiently conducted multi-party elections during the largest part of this century, while developing their own professional staff, and despite economic difficulties, budgetary restrictions, and a lack of high-technology equipment.

Second, on the concentration of authority: whatever the model of administration formally defined in the law, two main factors necessitate a measure of decentralization. The first is the massive nature of elections; the second, the holding of local elections in almost every democracy. Regardless of a society's economic and cultural development, actual universal suffrage tends to be the rule, and elections have, therefore, grown to a truly massive scale. Efficient management of electoral services would ideally require a dispersion of decision making. More importantly, local elections have become a universal phenomenon, requiring

local and regional electoral bodies to have a degree of autonomy. Unlike those of the past, today's democracies require political authorities at all levels to be elected by popular vote. In most of Latin America, for example, mayors and governors were first

elected by direct popular vote as recently as the 1980s. In the new democracies of Africa and other regions of the world, local elections are being called soon after the first general elections, and sometimes even prior to them. A rule of thumb in this domain would be that of centralized authority and decentralized management.

Third, on cost-effectiveness: no systematic research has been conducted, and not even a methodology has been developed yet for the comparative study of election costs, as is widely illustrated by the Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) project<sup>3</sup> and the UNDP paper. Nevertheless, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the data of some 50 countries collected for that paper. One main factor in cost variations worth mentioning is the extent of previous experience with multi-party elections. Significant discrepancies exist among the costs of elections in stable democracies, those in transitional systems, and those that take place in the context of special peacekeeping operations. Elections in countries

with more experience of multi-party elections are consistently less costly than in those where multi-party elections constitute a new undertaking. Interestingly enough, this tends to be the case regardless of the region of the world, the level of

economic development and whether elections were interrupted by periods of military rule. As a statistical trend, the least costly elections are held in countries with lengthy electoral experience: the United States and most western European countries; Chile, Costa Rica and Brazil in Latin America; Botswana and Kenya in Africa; India and Pakistan in Asia; and Australia. At the other extreme, elections held as part of broader peacekeeping operations, as could be expected, are the costliest.

Finally, on the use of new telecommunications and computer technologies: these are here to stay, if only because of their declining costs and ever-growing capacities. By their mere existence, they put pressure on the administration of elections at its different stages: registration, voting, and counting; not to speak of office management. Nevertheless, new technologies by themselves will not improve the integrity and acceptability of electoral systems – lack of transparency and mistrust must also be overcome. It would always be wise to take into consideration the condition of the political process before adopting any new technology; most importantly, by including the political stakeholders in the decision making process, as well as in the application of the new technologies. At a more managerial and technical level, decisions on adopting new technologies should form part of strategic planning by electoral bodies, for which a degree of institutional permanence is necessary. As pointed out by senior electoral officials of Canada at different times,<sup>4</sup> not only do cost considerations (both start-up and long-term) require attention, but also the advantages and disadvantages of alternative technologies vis-à-vis the specific needs of the country, as well as problems of obsolescence and maintenance.



New technologies by themselves will not improve the integrity and acceptability of electoral systems – lack of transparency and mistrust must also be overcome.

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## International Assistance and Networking

In the post-cold war democratization environment, elections and electoral management have transcended national borders to become an international endeavour in at least two senses. One has to do with political, financial and technical assistance from donor governments and international organizations. The other is professional networking among electoral authorities from various countries and regions of the world.

The international community has played a number of different roles in democratization processes world-wide. Its intervention has generally been considered effective in facilitating the democratization process and, in particular, the establishment of electoral bodies. In extreme crisis situations, the international community has sometimes literally taken over the organization of elections (i.e. the 1993 UN mission in Cambodia, and the current OSCE mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina). In other cases, a high profile role was played in the organization of elections in the context of the application of peace accords (i.e. El Salvador, Mozambique, and Haiti). It is generally acknowledged and has been documented that without an intervening international community, those elections would have not taken place. More common situations involve international financial and technical assistance to national authorities for the organization of elections in emerging and new democracies. This form of assistance has been considered generally appropriate and even decisive in some countries. As electoral bodies achieve organizational and operational improvements over time, they depend far less on administrative, management or operational support, although technical advice and financial assistance for elections and other governance-related areas will continue to be requested. It is relevant here to mention particular countries, such as Australia, Canada, Spain and Uruguay,

whose national electoral authorities are especially active in assisting other electoral authorities, both through institutional initiatives and the contribution of high-ranking electoral officials as resource persons for international missions.

A different, but related phenomenon is the recent expansion of international professional associations of electoral authorities in several regions of the world. In the Americas, a number of such organizations exist: the Association of Electoral Institutions of Central America and the Caribbean (*Asociacion de Organizaciones Electorales de America Central y el Caribe*), created under the so-called Protocol of Tikal; the Association of Latin American Electoral Tribunals, created under the so-called Protocol of Quito; and the Inter-American Union of Electoral Institutions (*Union Interamericana de Organismos Electorales*), which integrates the former two associations and includes also Mexico, the United States and Canada. In democratizing eastern and central Europe as well as Africa, associations were recently created under the auspices of the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES): the Association of Central and Eastern European Elections Officials (ACEEEO), established in 1991, and the Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA), which was endorsed by 14 countries of the region and established in 1997. In Asia, there is the Association of Asia Election Authorities (AAEA). In the Pacific region, there is an Association of Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators (PIANZEA). In addition, there is also a Commonwealth Association of Election Officers, and two U.S.-based international bodies: the International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers (IACREOT), and the International Institute for Municipal Clerks (IIMC). All these associations have been active in organizing regional conferences and workshops for election officials.

## Conclusion

Electoral bodies shaped after an institutional model of independence and permanency are making a significant contribution to democracy and the rule of law. In a number of cases, exceptional performance by electoral authorities has been noted. More frequently, however, proof of the importance of their role comes from negative experiences when poorly managed elections have damaged the legitimacy of emerging democratic systems. Although independence and permanency by themselves, even if actually enforced, are not sufficient conditions to guarantee the practice of free and fair elections in an efficient manner, they create better opportunities for enhancing transparency and public confidence, and hence for safeguarding the franchise, both in the early stages of democratization and in the foreseeable future. They can also improve technical efficiency in the conduct of the electoral process. 🗳️

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## ENDNOTES

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# CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS

## *Elections Canada on the International Scene*

FRANCE DEMIANENKO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES, ELECTIONS CANADA



Photo: Dominique-Christine Tremblay

*Voting at the 1996 presidential elections in Benin.*

Over the last decade, there has been a noticeable and welcome shift in the focus of international efforts supporting democratic development. The priority once was to help introduce democracy in previously authoritarian states staging their first free elections. Today, the issue is consolidating democratic procedures and institutions in countries that have already accepted and experienced the principle of democratic elections.

Consolidating democracy means first extending the reach of democratic governance. In turn, this translates into allowing a greater proportion of the population to actually vote, and making government more accountable to electors. Equally important, consolidating democracy means making the democratic process, system and institutions of every country independently sustainable over the long term, both politically and financially. As such, international electoral assistance today is rightfully considered a temporary measure. The objective is that each state should become democratically self-sufficient.

This does not preclude long-term international co-operation and sharing. Even the longest-standing and best-established democracies should and indeed do seek to learn from the experience of others, as they forever strive to adapt their systems and institutions to the evolving needs of their electorates.

Elections Canada has wholeheartedly embraced this shift from electoral aid to electoral co-operation. This is apparent throughout the agency's range of international activities, but most of all in its role as a founding member of the Partnership for Electoral and Democratic Development (PEDD). PEDD was created in April 1999 following the first meeting of the Global Electoral Organization (GEO) Network, which was hosted in Ottawa by Elections Canada.

## Pooling resources internationally

The groundbreaking PEDD initiative exemplifies the new direction of international efforts to develop democracy. Its rationale is to take advantage of the respective strengths of each partner, combining them into a uniquely effective pool of resources to address the emerging challenges of elections and democratic governance. The organization plans to work in many areas, but always with a view to going beyond short-term projects in response to immediate needs for a given election, to provide a strategy for institutional strengthening.

First and perhaps above all, PEDD means to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience related to organizational and technological developments in the field of electoral procedures and democratic governance.

To this end, it will foster participation in technical co-operation projects and high-level seminars or courses. It will also encourage international, regional and bilateral discussions for sharing democratic knowledge and values. PEDD may also see to the publication, in various languages, of texts that deal with electoral systems, instruments and processes that contribute to the promotion of democratic political culture. In the same spirit, it will arrange for the mutual secondment of specialists on topics of interest.

In a general sense, PEDD will work towards

ongoing exchange of information and expertise for the improvement of electoral administration and democratic governance everywhere.

PEDD was created jointly by five organizations: the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), an international, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that has undertaken activities related to democracy and governance in more than 100 countries since 1987; the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an intergovernmental organization founded in 1995 to promote sustainable democracy and develop standards and guidelines for election

administration; the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UN-EAD), which provides electoral assistance in numerous countries; the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) of Mexico, that country's non-partisan agency for electoral administration; and Elections Canada.

IFES, IDEA and UN-EAD will concentrate on promoting and sponsoring technical assistance. Mexico's IFE and Elections Canada will contribute experts and knowledge about electoral procedures. Together, they will be mindful to complement the tasks of other international organizations involved in electoral assistance, to avoid duplication of efforts and seek synergies in the quest to build the institutional capacity of electoral organizations. The PEDD intends to be outward-looking. In addition to the structured co-operation among its five founding members, each of the organizations is also free to engage in electoral and democratization activities with other states and organizations, bilaterally and multilaterally.

## Supporting Canadian Policy

Elections Canada's participation in PEDD is a natural extension of its current international activities. The agency's purpose is to back up Canada's position as an ardent supporter of democratic progress around the world. Canadian policy towards democratic progress on the international scene is directed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Elections Canada is a partner in implementing that policy. DFAIT and CIDA requests usually involve organizing missions abroad and hosting foreign visits in Canada. Elections Canada also participates actively in international organizations promoting democracy, and has developed bilateral and multilateral links with various countries' electoral organizations.



The groundbreaking PEDD initiative exemplifies the new direction of international efforts to develop democracy.



Namibia, 1989.

While Elections Canada's first objective is to support Canadian foreign policy objectives, it fully appreciates that it can itself benefit technically and professionally from involvement in international activities. This is a means of further developing its own expertise for the purposes of electoral management in Canada.

In recent years, Elections Canada has undertaken a great number of activities on the international scene. Country-to-country assistance initiatives have resulted, since 1990, in more than 300 professional, technical and observation missions abroad. Mission mandates included advising on constitutional and election law provisions; advising on all aspects of electoral process administration; conducting pre-election evaluations; providing technical aid and advice; preparing election documents and materials; training election officials; developing and conducting voter education programs; working directly with other electoral bodies to assist in democratic elections; organizing briefing sessions for visiting

foreign delegations; providing information on various aspects of the Canadian electoral process; and assisting other countries seeking to facilitate voting in their elections by their citizens residing in Canada.

The agency has also been an active participant in various international forums, including: the Council on Governmental Ethics and Laws (COGEL); the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO); the International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers (IACREOT); International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) – where Elections Canada's Assistant Chief Electoral Officer/International Services, Ron Gould, is a senior executive; IFES – where the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, is a member of the board and co-chairs the international advisory committee; the Commonwealth; La Francophonie; the *Unión Interamericana de Organismos Electorales* (UNIORE), or Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations, and its

*Centro de Asistencia y Promoción Electoral* (CAPEL), or Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance.

Elections Canada has also organized three trilateral conferences that brought together representatives from the United States, Mexico and Canada – and hosted one of the conferences in Ottawa, in 1995. In 1998, it hosted the fourth Inter-American Association of Electoral Authorities conference of the heads of electoral bodies from South, Central and North America. In April 1999, it staged the first conference of the Global Electoral Organization (GEO) Network. In addition, as we have stated, it was a founding member of PEDD.

## Consultative Role

In future, Elections Canada intends to further develop its consultative role through ongoing joint initiatives with electoral organizations in other countries. The agency considers this avenue to be an excellent means of exchanging information based on knowledge and experience and provides the opportunity to establish new partnerships with various organizations and the private sector. It favours long-term projects with a strategic value not only immediately before elections but in between international elections where operational pressures do not take precedence over long term development.

In short, it is most likely that Canadian resources will continue to support electoral activities at the request of numerous organizations around the world. Moreover, they will do so in a way that responds to the changing needs of democracy. 🇨🇦



# The ACE Project:

## *Toward Information Resource-Based Electoral Assistance*



MICHAEL BODA

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AND

DOMINIQUE-CHRISTINE TREMBLAY

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As election administrators around the globe focus on the coming millennium, they could well celebrate also the achievements of the recent past. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, election administrators successfully organized and implemented hundreds of elections that could not even have been imagined during the Cold War.

Until now, newly established democracies have relied heavily on the knowledge and expertise of professionals from the world's leaders in election administration. Electoral bodies like Elections Canada have played an integral role in the success of electoral events around the globe by sharing their personnel with developing democracies when there was need. While expert personnel will always be required, the focus is now turning to creating and disseminating election-related information resources which election administrators can use themselves to improve the techniques and procedures they use.

With this strategy, countries that would otherwise be hard-pressed to pay for their electoral process without assistance from an international donor can achieve significant administrative and cost efficiencies. The information resource-based approach will add to the sustainability of elections in new democracies.

## What is ACE?

Recognizing a significant opportunity for democratic advancement while observing the minimal information resources yet available, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), and the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) joined forces in 1997 to construct the first-ever on-line encyclopedia on election administration and costs.

Launched at the United Nations in 1998, the Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) Web site ([www.aceproject.org](http://www.aceproject.org)) and CD-ROM project brought together leading international organizations to produce a comprehensive resource for election administration, including information on the range of election alternatives available, the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives, and the administrative and cost

implications associated with each of them. The resulting documentation includes over 5 000 pages of information, with 3 000 pages of newly written text and 2 000 pages of case studies from various countries, scanned samples (such as ballots and voter education materials), and other useful information, such as bibliographies for additional research and electronic links to other election-related Web sites.

In developing the strategic plan for the project, the ACE Steering Committee and Project Management Team, composed of representatives from the partner organizations, laid out a variety of objectives: to increase knowledge and enhance learning about democratic electoral processes; to promote transparency, accountability, professionalism, and efficiency in electoral processes within the broader context of democratic development; to provide alternative frameworks and guidance to election officials and policy-makers seeking to strengthen national electoral systems; to encourage the use of good practices in electoral administration; to identify cost-effective elements in electoral system design and administrative practice; and to highlight the innovations in electoral administration originated by various countries.

These goals have been realized through information organized into nine topic areas representing the principal components of democratic elections: electoral systems,

legislative framework, electoral management, boundary delimitation, voter registration, voter education, parties and candidates, voting operations, and vote counting.

## Why Is the Material Needed?

The need for an accessible and comprehensive collection of information on the myriad alternative approaches to all aspects of election administration – from the drafting of constitutional language to the counting of votes – has been evident for some time.

The ACE Web site and CD-ROM represent a milestone contribution to the strengthening of the democratic process. They provide election administrators, legislators, assistance agencies, and academics all over the world with analytical and comparative texts and good-practice examples for use in organizing, supporting, or studying free and fair elections. By highlighting ways to reduce the costs of administering elections, the encyclopedia will assist in increasing the sustainability of electoral processes.

The enormous amount of information collected, and the expense of providing (and updating) this information in paper form, led to the decision to publish this compendium electronically. The increasing availability and affordability of computers, the worldwide accessibility of the Internet and the dramatic reduction in costs for the production of CD-ROMs made this option feasible.



The ACE  
Web site  
and CD-ROM  
represent a  
milestone  
contribution  
to the  
strengthening  
of the demo-  
cratic process.



Photo: IFES

ACE Project partners Nitin Desai of the UN, Bengt S ve-S derbergh of International IDEA, Richard Soudriette of IFES, and Project Co-ordinator Harry Neufeld celebrate the release of the ACE CD-ROM.

A hard-copy user's guide was prepared, and first released in conjunction with the recent Global Electoral Organization (GEO) Network Conference held in Ottawa from April 11 to 14, 1999. The *ACE User's Guide* serves as a quick reference guide to the ACE Web site and CD-ROM. It is also a means of offering those without access to the ACE Web site or to CD-ROM technology a brief overview of the ACE material so that they can request additional information from one of the partner organizations.

This first version of ACE, "Version 0," is intended as an initial information base from which to build a more comprehensive, globally-inclusive resource. Election officials, policy-makers and academics from around the world have been asked to review the material. Feedback will serve as a basis for updating and expanding the site.

## Electoral Bodies Make ACE Multilingual

The ACE material was initially written in English, but partnerships were forged to

make the information more accessible worldwide. On October 22, 1998, Elections Canada signed an agreement with the ACE partners in New York, assuming leadership for translating "Version 0" into French. Elections Canada undertook this project with the financial support of two other Canadian partners, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The Instituto Federal Electoral, Mexico's electoral body, has taken responsibility for translating the ACE material into Spanish. Other partners will translate the text into Russian.

Translating such on-line text is a challenge. At Elections Canada, the translation team is also creating a new French-English glossary and a lexicon for each topic area, adding French examples to the ACE Project, and adding case studies from French-speaking countries. The team is scheduled to complete the translation before the end of December 1999. Four of the nine topics are already available on the Web site (see: [www.aceproject.org](http://www.aceproject.org)).

## Next Steps

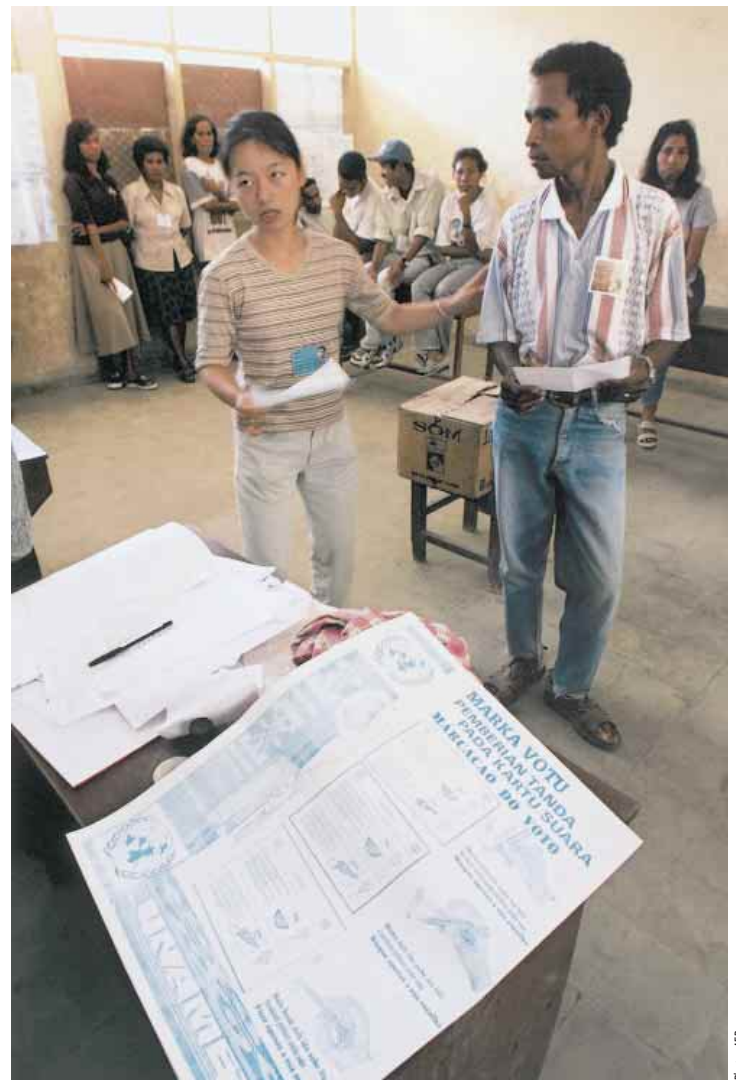
The ACE Web site and CD-ROM are innovative tools, already in use by election professionals around the globe today. The government of C te d'Ivoire, for example, recently expressed interest in using three of nine topic areas as a source of documentation for the preparation of their next presidential election in year 2000. The material has been actively used by election administrators in other countries preparing for elections, including Nigeria, Indonesia, and Bosnia. While working on translations of the ACE material, the project partners continue to assemble three new topic areas, Media and Elections, Election Technology, and Electoral Integrity. They are also preparing to carry out training projects to help electoral organizations make efficient use of the textbase created for this project. In addition, the partners are actively soliciting input from election professionals for revisions of the initial text. Keeping the information accurate and up-to-date remains a priority. 🗨️



# The East Timor Vote: *Canadians Contribute*

CHRISTINE JACKSON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, ELECTIONS CANADA

On September 3, 1999, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, announced to the Security Council the result of the referendum held on August 30 among East Timorese citizens around the world. The vote was 21.5 percent (94 388) in favour of autonomy within Indonesia and 78.5 percent (344 580) against – a result in favour of separation. In a remarkable show of courage and determination, the people of East Timor had turned out in massive numbers to express their will. Almost 98 percent of the electorate participated: an unprecedented turnout, considering the prevailing atmosphere of intimidation, which threatened on a daily basis the lives of at least the locally employed staff of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET).



A Japanese UN official trains a Timorese man to work at one of the 200 polling stations in East Timor on voting day, August 30.

Photo: AFP

In his statement, the Secretary-General said the United Nations would not fail the East Timorese, at the same time calling for an end to the violence that had broken out in East Timor immediately following the vote. A further statement on September 12 revealed that the Indonesian government had accepted the offer of a UN peacekeeping force to assist in restoring peace and security in East Timor.

## The Role of the Canadians

For twenty-six current and former Canadian returning officers, assistant returning officers and other election administrators, the vote was the culmination of a once-in-a-lifetime experience on the other side of the world that left indelible memories. At the request of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), working on behalf of the UN, the twenty-six were selected for their expertise and competence from a group of some fifty people recommended by Elections Canada. They left for Indonesia at the beginning of July, returning safely to Canada two months later.

Their role as district electoral officers (DEOs) would be to supervise the local staff who administered registration and voting in places outside East Timor, in Indonesia and elsewhere, where East Timorese voters were living. To assist with the unexpectedly heavy registration and voting in East Timor itself, UNAMET subsequently asked for volunteers among the DEOs to work in East Timor; seven Canadians were deployed there during the latter part of the registration period and five for the vote itself.

The stories of some of those Canadians accompany this article.

## Context of the Vote on East Timor

On May 5, 1999, Portugal, Indonesia and the United Nations concluded an historic set of agreements to resolve the long-standing issue of East Timor, a former Portuguese colony annexed by Indonesia in 1975 and subsequently plagued by violent internal conflict. The agreements empowered the Secretary-General of the UN



Photo: United Nations

*A United Nations poster promised East Timorese citizens that their vote in the August 30 referendum would be secret.*

to determine, through a popular consultation based on a universal, direct and secret ballot, whether the East Timorese people would accept or reject a proposed special autonomy for East Timor within the unitary Republic of Indonesia.

On June 11, 1999, the UN Security Council established UNAMET, which proceeded to organize and conduct the vote in less than three months. It registered 451 792 potential voters in East Timor and around the world, in a process which the Electoral Commission deemed a sound basis for the conduct of the vote. Some 24 000 of the registrants were located outside East Timor.

UNAMET's electoral section conducted the process through eight regional offices, under the guidance of a Chief Electoral Officer (an American – Jeff Fischer), who was in charge of the organizational arrangements for the

consultation process and, in particular, all activities related to registration and voting. Those activities were, in turn, overseen by a three-member Electoral Commission, composed of internationally known experts.

## Qualifications to Vote and Voting

Those aged 17 years or more were eligible to vote in the popular consultation, provided:

- they were born in East Timor, or
- they were born outside East Timor but had at least one parent who was born in East Timor, or
- they had a spouse in either of the two previous categories.

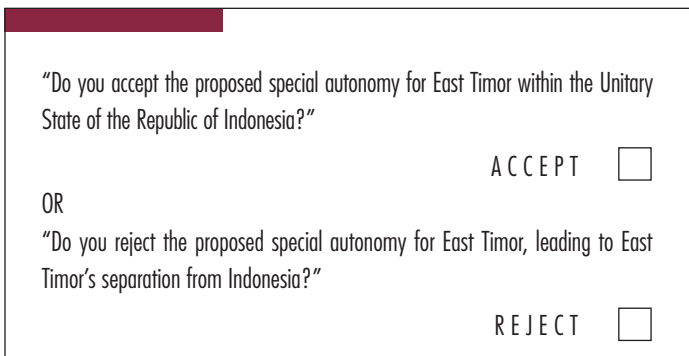
Residency in East Timor or even Indonesia was not a requirement. To facilitate registration and voting outside East Timor, special voting centres were opened in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Denpasar and Ujung Pandang, all in Indonesia; Lisbon (Portugal); Maputo (Mozambique); and Macau. Additional sites in Australia, in Sydney, Darwin, Perth and Melbourne, were operated by the Australian Electoral Commission, with another centre located at UNHQ, New York.



The external polling called for in the May 5 agreements was conducted, on behalf of the United Nations, by the Australian Electoral Commission in Australia, and by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) everywhere else. The IOM field co-ordinator, the Electoral Assistance Division of the UN and the UNAMET electoral section shared responsibility for co-ordinating registration and voting outside East Timor.

## The Ballot Paper

At polling stations on August 30, each voter was asked to choose between two questions:



“Do you accept the proposed special autonomy for East Timor within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia?”

ACCEPT

OR

“Do you reject the proposed special autonomy for East Timor, leading to East Timor’s separation from Indonesia?”

REJECT

The United Nations logo was printed on the ballot papers, which included symbols to facilitate voting by illiterate persons. The symbols used were the flags of the state of Indonesia, which accompanied the first question, and of the East Timor independence movement, which appeared against the second question.

## Organization of Registration and Voting

Voter registration took place during a period of twenty-four days under the supervision of two UN volunteers (the DEOs) in each of 200 polling centres. Those centres, in turn, were subdivided into 700 polling stations for voting purposes.

The UN undertook to ensure that the campaign would be free of intimidation. To achieve this, it conducted an information campaign on the process and prepared a campaign code of conduct, as well as other mechanisms to counteract intimidation attempts. The three-member Electoral Commission was to adjudicate any challenges or complaints, including those related to the results of the vote.

## Information Campaign

UNAMET’s mandate included the provision of equal access to radio and support of information activities for both sides of the question, so that all views could be presented freely.

To facilitate understanding among the electorate, the UN made available the text of the main agreement and the autonomy document to be voted on in five languages – Tetun, Bahasa, Indonesian, Portuguese and English – and undertook to disseminate and explain their contents in an impartial and factual manner, both inside and outside East Timor.

Making use of the radio stations and newspapers in East Timor, as well as other Indonesian and Portuguese media outlets, the United Nations also undertook to explain to voters the process and procedure of the vote, and the implications of an “accept” or “reject” vote.

## Observation

Both Indonesia and Portugal were entitled to send an equal number of representatives to observe all phases of the consultation process.

Since the United Nations itself, through UNAMET, was organizing and conducting the popular consultation, it was neither responsible for assisting nor co-ordinating the activities of international observers. Nevertheless, those wishing to observe were required to obtain accreditation from the UN and to abide by a UN code of conduct.

## Schedule of the Consultation Process

The schedule for the consultation process was established as follows:

- Registration of voters: June 16 to August 4
- Exhibition of voters lists and challenges/decisions on challenges and complaints: August 17-27
- Political campaign: August 11-27
- “Cooling off” period: August 28-29
- Polling day: August 30, 1999

Note: the above was compiled from information posted on the United Nations (UNAMET) Web site at <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/> and from transcripts of the daily press briefings given by the representative of the UN Secretary-General at UNHQ in New York, posted at <http://www.un.org/News/briefings/7days.html>.

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## Extracts from the Stories of Canadian Returning Officers on the Mission to Indonesia/East Timor:

### Acronyms:

EEC – European Economic Community

UNAMET – UN Mission in East Timor

DEO – District Electoral Officer

IOM – International Organization for Migration

**The Returning Officer for the Alberta riding of St. Albert, Alice Killam, worked in the UNAMET centre in Jakarta during the registration period and was one of five Canadians who volunteered to serve in East Timor for the**



**actual vote. The following is an extract from one of her communications received during the registration phase.**

“We were very tired, but humbled, serving the registrants, considering the complex process itself, the strict eligibility and identification requirements, coupled with the fact

that, in many cases, these folks had travelled up to four days and nights just to get to us – young babies crying, very pregnant mothers sick and shaken from long sea journeys, and a very wise 84-year-old man whose smile and firm handshake just melted my heart. Thoughts of him, and the memories he must possess, bring the moment alive – again, again and again. What an honour to be here ... if just for a minute and another handshake ... another magical smile.

“Whether I return one day to a country called East Timor or a province called Timor Timur within Indonesia, I will be glad to return. And return, I will. Sincerely, Alice Killam.”

**Henri O'Reilly, Returning Officer for Palliser, Saskatchewan, volunteered to serve in East Timor during the voting phase. On his return to Canada, he was interviewed by the Moose Jaw Herald and also described his experiences by telephone to an Elections Canada staff member. The following segment is based on those interviews:**



Henri O'Reilly was originally assigned with three others to Yogyakarta in Central Java, where he worked through the registration phase of the mission. His most moving experience of that period came when a group of political prisoners was brought from jail to register for the vote. Involved in the Santa Cruz massacre of

1991, they had received sentences of anywhere from five years to life for retaliating against Indonesian troops who had opened fire on a funeral procession.

On August 20, Henri responded to UNAMET's request for volunteers to help with the voting in East Timor, as they were short of staff there. So, on Saturday, August 28, he flew with delegations from Ireland and Finland on an EEC charter flight to Dili, the capital of East Timor. The next day a helicopter took him to the town of Suai, where UNAMET had a regional operation (and where, a week later, 40 residents were killed in a church).

Travelling with an Australian colleague from UNAMET, Catherine Williams, who fortunately spoke the local language, Henri left Suai the same afternoon and drove an hour and a half by Land Rover up into the mountains to the village of Fato Lillac near the border with West Timor, where the local population lives in thatched huts and is 80 percent illiterate. Arriving about 2:30 p.m., they spent the rest of the afternoon securing the building where they stored the ballot boxes with makeshift wire “locks” and training the local poll officials for the next day's work, before retiring for the night – with the boxes.

Rising at 4:30 a.m. on voting day, August 30, Henri and his colleague found the local people already lined up, waiting for them to open the poll at 6:00 a.m. By 11:45 a.m., everyone who was going to vote had voted – 776 of the 786 eligible electors, or a turnout of 98.7 percent.

To overcome the illiteracy problem, UNAMET had printed the two referendum questions on the ballot, each accompanied by a symbol, and had conducted a voter information program in the weeks leading up to voting day.

In Fato Lillac, as in other polling places, illiterate voters were permitted to mark the ballot by means of punching a hole, with a nail, through the symbol of their choice.

In order to get back to Suai before dark (about 6:00 p.m.), Henri and Catherine left the village in their Land Rover about 4:30 p.m. with the ballot boxes and an Indonesian police escort. The next morning, a helicopter flew the ballot boxes from the region back to Dili, returning that afternoon to pick up Henri and the other UNAMET workers. In Dili, they became aware of the emerging violence, hearing shots in the streets and talking to international journalists at the hotel. They were flown back to Jakarta the following day.

Although Henri never felt personally threatened, the local electoral staff hired by the international officials were very afraid and

were constantly threatened. "People were telling us that they expected the violence to happen the day after the vote: they were right," Henri told the *Moose Jaw Herald*. He added that fourteen local poll staff told UNAMET officials that they had been warned "the payoff would come after the vote." Asked if he would do it all again, Henri replied: "Yes, it was a great experience."



**Bill Twaddle, Returning Officer for the Ontario riding of Bruce-Grey, was assigned to the East Timorese enclave in West Timor. On his return, he sent the following reflections on his experiences to Elections Canada:**

"If I come home from Indonesia with one overall impression, it is of the dignity and courage of the East Timorese people – and the contrasts with the voting process in Canada.

"We all know now about the violence, intimidation, burnings, beatings and killings that have gone on in East Timor for many years. We are all too familiar with the escalation in recent months as the popular consultation moved forward. And, of course, we have seen the tragic aftermath of the overwhelming vote for independence.

"What impresses me so much is the determination of the East Timorese people to have a say in their future, knowing that having that say would undoubtedly create further violence and unrest. I do not claim to have a crystal ball: I cannot say that it was obvious in the days leading up to the vote that violence would break out on the scale it did, but there were plenty of signs that the result would not be quietly accepted.

"The East Timorese people themselves knew what the consequences might be. I saw none of the intimidation myself, but other Canadian DEOs talked about the threats they had heard against the local staff hired by UNAMET – threats that they would be killed, simply for working for UNAMET, once the UN was gone. Some of those threats, it seems, were indeed acted on.

"During my nine days in Timor, I was stationed in Oecussi in Ambeno Regency, the East Timorese enclave in West Timor. The Regency was quiet, with virtually none of the tension or intimidation that had been present in other areas. Yet the voters of Ambeno displayed the same proud courage, turning out in unexpectedly large numbers to register, and a second time to vote.

"I think about the complaints I received during the last federal election in Canada – about how people had to travel an extra few blocks to the polling station – and then I reflect on the hundreds of East Timorese who travelled, standing in the back of open trucks, 40 and 50 people crammed in for hours over virtually non-existent roads, just to stand in line for up to two days to register to vote.

"I think about how, in Canada, voting is so taken for granted that a big turnout is 70 percent, and can be as low as 40 percent (or less) in some municipal elections. And then I remember the almost 440 000 East Timorese who registered to vote (UNAMET had estimated 395 000 would register) and the overwhelming 98.6 percent turnout on the day of the vote. They voted, knowing the simple act of expressing their free will might, and in some cases did, cost them their lives.

"I think about how, in Canada, the integrity of the vote is so taken for granted that it is sometimes hard to get witnesses to the counting

of the ballots after an election. And then I reflect on how that contrasts with Indonesia, where electoral corruption is somehow expected. Our every action was carried out under the close scrutiny of accredited observers, who took their responsibilities very seriously and exercised their right to monitor every step in the process, including staying with the ballot boxes from the end of voting until the boxes were opened and the ballots counted. That was not done out of distrust for the Canadians, but out of a sincere desire to know that the vote was conducted fairly and impartially.

"I recall the two or three occasions in the last Canadian federal election where unfortunate circumstances meant that we had to tell someone they would not be allowed to vote, because special balloting was closed and they could not attend their home poll. Then I remember the more than 100 East Timorese who travelled two days by speedboat and ship from the plywood factory in the rain forest of Borneo, only to be told that they

had missed the registration deadline and, despite their appeals to UNAMET, they would not be allowed to register and vote. We were all impressed by the forceful, but calm and dignified way they made their protest, and by their mature acceptance of the decision.

"It was a great time and a truly rewarding experience, and one I would gladly undertake again. Two months in Indonesia, nine days in Timor, the experience of a lifetime – and a clear lesson in how well the electoral system works in Canada, and in just how much we take for granted." 🇨🇦



... in many cases, these folks had travelled up to four days and nights just to get to us ...

# *Voter Turnout in Canada*<sup>1</sup>

## Findings from the 1997 Canadian Election Study

**TONY COULSON**  
FORMER RESEARCH PROJECT OFFICER,  
ELECTIONS CANADA

This paper analyzes data from the 1997 Canadian Election Study, which was primarily funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, with an additional financial contribution from Elections Canada. Elections Canada suggested specific questions about voter participation and electoral administration. The paper was prepared in 1998 when the author was Research Project Officer at Elections Canada.



### Introduction

In the 36 federal general elections and three referendums held in Canada since 1867, an average of 71 percent of registered electors has turned out to vote.<sup>2</sup> Voter turnout ranged from a low of 44 percent in the prohibition plebiscite of 1898 to a high of 79 percent at the general election of 1958.<sup>3</sup>

In each decade between the 1940s and the 1980s, the average voter turnout in Canadian federal elections has been in the range of 73 percent to 78 percent. Despite the appearance of lower turnout rates in the

1990s – official turnout figures of 69.6 percent in 1993 and 67 percent in 1997 – there is evidence that the real decline occurred in 1997. Due to the inclusion of duplicate names and the names of deceased persons on the 1993 final list, the official turnout was artificially low.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of the growth of the electoral lists over time, Blais et al. have estimated the voter turnout rate in 1993 at approximately 73 percent.<sup>5</sup> The turnout rate of 67 percent in 1997, however, is the lowest since 1925.

The 1997 decline in Canadian voter turnout can be viewed as something of a

paradox for two reasons. First, Canadians – like the citizens of other industrialized nations – are better educated and have easier access to larger amounts of information than ever before.<sup>6</sup> According to traditional expectations, these better-educated and more-informed citizens should be more likely to vote.<sup>7</sup>

Second, in the period since 1992, numerous legislative amendments have been made to reduce “administrative disenfranchisement.”<sup>8</sup> Numerous provisions in Canada’s electoral legislation now facilitate the exercise of the franchise.<sup>9</sup>

## Multivariate Analysis

Through a multivariate analysis of data from the 1997 Canadian Election Study (CES), several determinants of voter turnout have been identified. The 1997 Canadian Election Study is a three-wave survey of the Canadian electorate. The first survey was conducted during the election campaign period and 3 949 interviews were completed by telephone. The second survey was conducted in the period following the election and 3 170 of the campaign-period respondents were re-interviewed, again by telephone. The third component of the study was a self-administered mail-back survey which was completed by 1 857 of the post-election respondents.<sup>10</sup> Data analyzed here are drawn exclusively from the campaign wave and post-election telephone surveys.

The analysis focused on four explanations: demographic, psychological, political, and contextual. First, the demographic explanation relates to the personal resources of voters and non-voters. It is argued that individuals' demographic attributes give them the resources to participate in politics. "Those with limited personal resources – little formal education, low income, no job, or marginal occupational status – are considered less likely to vote than others."<sup>11</sup>

Second, the psychological explanation suggests that individuals' general involvement in politics affects their turnout. General political interest, possession of politically relevant information, and an individual belief that means of political influence are available are believed to influence elector participation.

Third, political factors such as affiliation with a political party, or a high level of political cynicism should also influence voter turnout.

Fourth, the electoral context is thought to influence voter turnout. Included here are factors such as the level of campaign mobilization, the perceived competitiveness

of the race, and the electoral laws. If an election does not capture the public's attention, is lopsided, or if procedural barriers to voting exist, not voting is expected to increase.<sup>12</sup>

In general, it appears that each of the socio-demographic, psychological, political, and contextual explanations contributes something to our understanding of voter turnout in the 1997 Canadian general election.

A total of 19 indicator variables were regressed against the vote/not vote variable (4 regional, 7 socio-demographic, 3 psychological, 2 political and 3 contextual). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1. Despite the theoretical reasons<sup>13</sup> to expect each variable to affect turnout independently, only 10 indicator variables are found to be significant with the full set of controls in place.

The cell entries in Table 1 are unstandardized ordinary least squares regression coefficients (B) with standard errors in parentheses. Statistical significance is indicated by the symbols (see the notes at the bottom of the table). The regression coefficients are interpreted as the percentage change in the dependent variable resulting from a unit change in the independent variable. For example, the coefficient for "young" indicates that an elector aged 25 years or less in 1997 was 11 percent less likely to vote than an older elector.

Other socio-demographic factors also influence voter turnout. Recent immigrants to Canada and non-Christians are each about 6 percent less likely than others to vote, whereas university graduates and retired persons are about 7 percent more likely than others to vote.

In terms of psychological indicators, survey respondents with a low level of general political interest are about 4 percent less likely than others to vote, whereas highly informed electors are about 9 percent more likely than their less informed counterparts to vote.

The results for the political variables indicate that an elector who does not identify with one of the political parties is about 10 percent less likely to vote than someone who does have such an affiliation.

Finally, in terms of the electoral context, the data indicate that electors who are unaware that it is possible to vote if they are unable to go to the poll on election day are 7 percent less likely than others to vote. In addition, electors who indicated that there was no important election issue are about 12 percent less likely to vote than those who named an important issue.

TABLE 1

### Determinants of Voter Turnout<sup>†</sup>

| Indicator variables                | Coefficient             |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Regional</b>                    |                         |
| Atlantic                           | .02 (.03)               |
| Quebec                             | .06 (.02)**             |
| Prairies                           | -.02 (.02)              |
| British Columbia                   | .03 (.02)               |
| <b>Socio-demographic</b>           |                         |
| young                              | -.11 (.02)***           |
| low income                         | -.02 (.02) <sup>a</sup> |
| unemployed                         | -.03 (.03)              |
| new immigrant                      | -.06 (.03)*             |
| non-Christian                      | -.06 (.02)**            |
| university graduate                | .07 (.02)***            |
| retired person                     | .07 (.02)**             |
| <b>Psychological</b>               |                         |
| low political interest             | -.04 (.02)*             |
| politics too complicated           | -.03 (.02)              |
| high information                   | .09 (.03)***            |
| <b>Political</b>                   |                         |
| no party identification            | -.10 (.02)***           |
| cynicism                           | -.04 (.03)              |
| <b>Contextual</b>                  |                         |
| unaware of voting options          | -.07 (.02)***           |
| no important issue                 | -.12 (.02)***           |
| electoral district competitiveness | -.01 (.03)              |
| intercept                          | .87 (.03)***            |
| adjusted R <sup>2</sup>            | .11                     |
| F                                  | 16.86***                |

<sup>†</sup> n = 2412; <sup>a</sup> p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

This analysis suggests that individual resources, such as education, time and democratic experience (retirement, and length of time in Canada), do contribute to elector participation. The data also indicate that psychological factors, such as a general interest in politics and a high level of information also contribute. Partisanship, a political factor, is also relevant to voter turnout, as is the electoral context and its effect on elector mobilization and the perceived accessibility of the system.

## Reasons for Not Voting

Responses to a question asking non-voters if there was a particular reason they did not vote were also analyzed. These reasons can be grouped into five categories (and others).

First, 38 percent of non-voters indicated that they did not want to vote, did not know who to vote for, or gave other cynical reasons for not voting. Respondents in this group were also significantly more likely than others to have no party identification and to have indicated that there was no important election issue.

Second, 27.3 percent of non-voters reported that they did not vote because they were busy or working. Students and working people are more likely than others (retirees, homemakers, and the unemployed) to have given this response.

Third, 9.5 percent of non-voters reported being away from their electoral district (either absent or on vacation). Not surprisingly, students – who often attend university or college away from home – are significantly more likely than others to have given this reason.

Fourth, 6.6 percent of reported non-voters were sick or busy with family or personal business and therefore did not vote. The proportion of respondents giving this reason increases significantly with the age of the respondent.

The fifth group is comprised of approximately 6.6 percent of non-voters, or about 1 percent of the post-election sample, who gave responses that can be considered administrative in nature. Seventeen respondents (3 percent of non-voters) stated that they did not vote because they were not enumerated, registered or otherwise on the list of electors. Seven respondents (1.3 percent of non-voters) stated that they had inadequate information. Five respondents (0.9 percent of non-voters) indicated that the polling station was too far from their homes, four (0.7 percent) reported arriving at the poll too late, one could not enter the poll due to a wheelchair accessibility problem, and one did not receive a ballot (presumably this respondent had applied to vote under the Special Voting Rules).

Thus, these findings are generally consistent with the results of the multivariate analysis presented in the previous section.

## Awareness of Voting Methods

Respondents were also asked if it is possible for someone to vote if they cannot get to the poll on election day. The results indicate that the advance polls are the best-known alternative method of voting (named by 47 percent of all respondents to the survey). Fewer respondents appear to be aware of Special Voting Rules – approximately 5 percent of all respondents gave this answer.

Many respondents incorrectly reported that voting by proxy (which has been repealed), and voting by phone are available alternatives at the federal level.

Thus, these data suggest that many Canadian electors are not aware of the alternative voting methods available to them. The multivariate analysis, presented earlier, confirmed that this lack of awareness is a significant contributor to not voting.

## Conclusion

As noted, the 1997 decline in Canadian voter turnout appears somewhat paradoxical, given the socio-structural situation in Canada on the one hand, and the legislative developments of recent years on the other.

On the legislative front, the findings are consistent; many Canadians are unaware of the range of alternative voting methods available to them and this is a significant determinant of not voting. Thus, if Canadians were made aware of the various voting methods available to them, turnout might increase somewhat.

In regard to the structural changes noted, it appears that the tendency for more educated and informed citizens to vote is being offset by one or more other factors. One well-documented trend in this regard is a general decline in political partisanship. Nevitte, for example, reviews an extensive literature and concludes that “citizen attachments to traditional political parties have been weakening in nearly every advanced industrial state during the last decade or so,” and that publics are turning, in growing numbers, to forms of political participation other than voting.<sup>14</sup> On Canada specifically, Clarke et al. note that:

*The overall percentage of nonidentifiers [those with no party identification] in our 1997 survey, 30 percent, is unprecedented for any election year since 1965. Prior to 1997, the largest percentage of nonidentifiers in any election year was 13 percent (in 1993), and the average was 12 percent.<sup>15</sup>*

Thus, given that non-identifiers are about 10 percent less likely than identifiers to vote, this decline in partisanship must have contributed to the reduced voter turnout in 1997.

It appears, then, that although Canadians are better educated, more informed, and more interested in politics, many are turning away from traditional

party affiliations and toward other forms of political participation. This helps, in part, to explain the reduction in Canadian voter turnout.

It has also been argued that the 1997 Canadian general election failed to capture the attention of many citizens. Greenspon, for example, notes that the necessity of calling the election in June 1997 was

questioned.<sup>16</sup> Pammett also notes that the number of Canadians who failed to name an important election issue is an indicator of the lack of public interest in the 1997 election.<sup>17</sup> As demonstrated, the view that there was no important election issue is a significant determinant of not voting. Thus, turnout would likely have been somewhat higher had an important issue emerged

and captured the attention of Canadians in 1997.

Finally, comparative research demonstrates that institutional factors such as compulsory voting, the voting age, the proportionality of the electoral system, and other factors influence turnout rates.<sup>18</sup> Thus, reforms at this level could also have a positive effect on voter turnout in Canada. ❏

## ENDNOTES

1. The author wishes to thank André Blais for useful comments on an earlier version of this analysis. Variable descriptions are available from the author.
2. Canadian voter turnout is calculated as the percentage of those registered on the electoral lists who cast a vote.
3. *A History of the Vote in Canada* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services for the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, 1997), pp. xvii and Appendix.
4. See "Note to the Reader", in *Official Voting Results, Thirty-fifth General Election, 1993* (Ottawa: Chief Electoral Officer of Canada). Also note that the *Canada Elections Act* has since been amended to permit the removal of duplicate names and names of deceased persons.
5. See A. Blais, A. Bilodeau, and C. Kam, "Déplacement des votes entre les élections de 1993 et 1997." (Montreal: typescript).
6. On education, see N. Neviite, *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), p. 24. On the "information explosion," see M. Kanji and K. Archer, "When and How Canadian Voters Decide: Searching for Systematic Trends in Canadian Election Campaigns," paper prepared for the Annual Canadian Political Science Association Meeting, Ottawa (May/June 1998), pp. 7, 11-13.
7. See W. Mishler, *Political Participation in Canada: Prospects for Democratic Citizenship* (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1979), pp. 68, 98; also Neviite (1996), p. 50.
8. J. Pammett, "Voting Turnout in Canada" in Bakvis, ed., *Voter Turnout in Canada*, Volume 15 of the research studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), p. 35.
9. Bill C-78 (1992) included level access, mobile polls, transfer certificates for electors with disabilities to vote at a poll with level access, and public education and information programs. Bill C-114 (1993) included the extension of polling day registration to urban areas, and the extension of the Special Voting Rules to Canadian citizens temporarily outside Canada, inmates, and electors in Canada who are unable to vote at the advance poll or on polling day in their electoral district. Bill C-63 (1997) provided for a longer period for revision of the lists of electors, some revisions by phone, and registration at advance polls; it also extended the deadline for the receipt of mail-in ballots and lengthened the voting day to 12 hours. The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing in its four-volume 1991 report, *Reforming Electoral Democracy* (Toronto: Dundurn Press), recommended many of these changes.
10. The Canadian Election Study was primarily funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, with an additional financial contribution from Elections Canada. The co-investigators are André Blais (Université de Montréal), Elisabeth Gidengil (McGill University), Richard Nadeau (Université de Montréal), and Neil Neviite (University of Toronto). Fieldwork for this project was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University. Neither the co-investigators, nor the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, nor the Institute for Social Research bear any responsibility for the analyses and conclusions presented here.
11. L. Ragsdale and J. G. Rusk, "Who are Nonvoters? Profiles from the 1990 Senate Elections," in *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1993), p. 722. See also H. E. Brady, S. Verba, and K. L. Schlozman, "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation," in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (1995) pp. 271-294.
12. L. Ragsdale and J. G. Rusk, "Who are Nonvoters?" (1993), p. 722; also M. Eagles, "The Franchise and Political Participation in Canada," in Tanguay and Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Parties in Transition*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996), p. 315.
13. On Canada, see M. Eagles, "The Franchise and Political Participation in Canada," in Tanguay and Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Parties in Transition*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996); and Bakvis, ed., *Voter Turnout in Canada*, Volume 15 of the research studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991). General studies include: R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg, "The Not So Simple Act of Voting," in Ada W. Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II* (American Political Science Assoc., 1993); M. Franklin, "Electoral Participation," in LeDuc, Niemi and Norris, eds., *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Sage, 1996), pp. 216-235; and J. Blondel, R. Sinnott and P. Svensson, "Representation and Voter Participation," in *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 32 (1997), pp. 243-272.
14. N. Neviite, *The Decline of Deference*, pp. 50 & 76.
15. H. D. Clarke, P. Wearing, A. Kornberg and M. C. Stewart, "The Contest that Nobody Won: The 1997 Canadian Federal Election and the National Party System" (unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203, 1997). Clarke et al. note that "although there is no canonical version of a party identification question battery, the 1974-80 CNES and 1983-1997 PSC surveys have fully consistent question wording to facilitate over-time comparisons."
16. E. Greenspon, "Following the Trail of Campaign '97," in Frizell and Pammett, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), p. 23; also L. LeDuc, "The Canadian Federal Election of 1997" in *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1998), p. 134.
17. J. H. Pammett, "The Voters Decide" in Frizell and Pammett, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), p. 236.
18. A. Blais and A. Dobrzynska, "Turnout in Electoral Democracies," in *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 33 (1998), pp. 239-261.

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# ***Third Party Expenditures:*** **An Analysis of the 1997 Canadian Election Study**

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ELECTIONS CANADA

The results presented here are based on the mail-back component of the survey in the 1997 Canadian Election Study. The sample size is 1 848 and the margin of error is approximately 2.3 percent. The approximate margins of error for the provincial/regional samples are as follows: Atlantic Canada, 7.5 percent; Quebec, 4.6 percent; Ontario, 3.7 percent; Manitoba/Saskatchewan, 8.5 percent; Alberta, 7.3 percent; and British Columbia, 6.7 percent.

To determine the degree to which Canadians support limits on candidate and political party expenditures, survey respondents were asked: *Do you think political parties and candidates should be allowed to spend as much as they want in an election campaign or should there be a limit on what they can spend?* The results demonstrate strong support for limits on party and candidate spending; 93.8 percent responded that there should be a limit, 4.3 percent indicated that there should be no limit, and 1.9 percent were not sure. There are no major differences by region.

To assess public attitudes toward the participation and spending of third party electoral participants, survey respondents were asked: *Which comes closer to your own view: "only political parties and candidates should be allowed to advertise during election campaigns" or "advertising by other individuals and groups should also be allowed during election campaigns"?* In response, 35 percent indicated that only political parties and candidates should be allowed to advertise during election campaigns; 50.1 percent responded that advertising by other individuals and groups should also be allowed; and 14.9 percent were not sure. The results by region follow.



## Who Should Be Allowed to Advertise during Election Campaigns?

| REGION*               | ONLY PARTIES AND CANDIDATES | OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS ALSO | NOT SURE |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| National result       | 35                          | 50                                | 15       |
| Atlantic Canada       | 27                          | 58                                | 15       |
| Quebec                | 51                          | 35                                | 14       |
| Ontario               | 31                          | 54                                | 16       |
| Manitoba/Saskatchewan | 29                          | 58                                | 14       |
| Alberta               | 28                          | 50                                | 22       |
| British Columbia      | 32                          | 58                                | 10       |
| Territories           | 20                          | 60                                | 20       |

\*Regional groupings are based on sample size and margin of error.

Residents of Quebec are the least supportive of allowing interest groups to participate in election campaigns (35 percent).

Respondents were also asked: *If individuals and groups other than candidates and political parties are going to advertise during election campaigns, should there be a limit on what they can spend?* Overall, 82.7 percent answered yes, 10.7 percent answered no, and 6.6 percent were not sure. The results by region follow.

## Should Third Party Spending Be Limited?

| REGION*               | YES | NO | NOT SURE |
|-----------------------|-----|----|----------|
| National result       | 83  | 11 | 7        |
| Atlantic Canada       | 86  | 9  | 5        |
| Quebec                | 92  | 5  | 3        |
| Ontario               | 78  | 13 | 9        |
| Manitoba/Saskatchewan | 85  | 10 | 5        |
| Alberta               | 78  | 14 | 9        |
| British Columbia      | 80  | 13 | 7        |
| Territories           | 75  | 25 | —        |

\*Regional groupings are based on sample size and margin of error.

To obtain a sense of the type of spending limit that Canadians would consider fair, respondents were asked: *Suppose individuals and groups can advertise, should they be allowed to spend: “less than candidates”, “the same as candidates”, or “more than candidates”?* In response, 48.1 percent indicated that third parties should be allowed to spend “the same as candidates”; 31 percent responded “less than candidates”; 3.8 percent responded “more than candidates”; and 17.7 percent were not sure. A large majority of respondents are of the opinion that third parties should not be permitted to spend more than candidates (79 percent). The following data suggest that Canadians are divided on this question by region.

## Should Individuals and Groups Be Allowed to Spend Less, the Same, or More than Candidates?

| REGION*               | LESS THAN | SAME AS | MORE THAN | NOT SURE |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|
| National result       | 31        | 48      | 4         | 18       |
| Atlantic Canada       | 31        | 52      | 4         | 13       |
| Quebec                | 43        | 39      | 1         | 17       |
| Ontario               | 25        | 51      | 5         | 19       |
| Manitoba/Saskatchewan | 33        | 46      | 8         | 14       |
| Alberta               | 26        | 49      | 6         | 19       |
| British Columbia      | 24        | 54      | 3         | 18       |
| Territories           | 25        | 50      | —         | 25       |

\*Regional groupings are based on sample size and margin of error.

These results are consistent with those of a study conducted for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing. According to that study, when faced with the choice of having spending limits for all participants, including third parties, or limits for none, 90 percent of Canadians opted for controls (Blais and Gidengil, RCERPF research volume 17, 1991: 84-89). 🗳️

# People Power

## *British Columbia's Experience with Recall*



Photo: John Tamashy/Visions West

ROBERT A. PATTERSON, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

**B**ritish Columbia's Chief Electoral Officer argues that only wide support across the community will produce a successful recall campaign; factional interests alone cannot unseat a Member.

The *Recall and Initiative Act*, which provides British Columbia voters with a process to remove their Member of the Legislative Assembly, was passed in 1994 and brought into force in 1995.

The Act resulted from a referendum held in conjunction with the October 1991 provincial general election.

Two questions were asked in the referendum:

- a) Should voters be given the right, by legislation, to vote between elections for the removal of their Member of the Legislative Assembly?
- b) Should voters be given the right, by legislation, to propose questions that the government of British Columbia must submit to voters by referendum?

The questions were put to the voters as the result of an agreement between the Social Credit government of the day and the new Reform Party. In essence, the agreement was that, in exchange for having the direct democracy questions placed before the electorate, the Reform Party would not run a full slate of candidates at the next election, thus preventing the right wing vote from splitting.

The government was in the last few months of its five-year mandate when the Premier resigned. Under the new Premier, the government hoped to engage the Official Opposition New Democratic Party in the "direct democracy debate" during the election campaign, thus diverting the attention of voters from other issues. Unfortunately for the government, the Leader of the New

Democrats stated early in the campaign that he was going to vote "Yes" to both questions and the debate never took place. In October 1991, the New Democrats formed the new government.

For question a, the "Yes" option received 81 percent of valid votes cast.

For question b, the "Yes" option received 83 percent of valid votes cast.

On June 23, 1992, the British Columbia Attorney General moved that the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills be empowered to examine and inquire into all matters and issues concerning the two referendum questions. The committee was referred the matter on March 25, 1993, and reported on November 23, 1993. Legislation was introduced on June 16, 1994.

### Provisions of the Act

The recall legislation includes these basic provisions.

- a) Upon a successful petition, the Member ceases to hold office and the seat of the Member in the Legislative Assembly becomes vacant.
- b) An application for a recall petition cannot be made within 18 months of a Member's election. This would allow time for a Member, once elected, to learn the duties of the job. Additionally, this period would discourage the phenomenon of "sore losers" immediately sponsoring a recall to overturn the election.
- c) Only those who were registered voters in the Member's electoral district at the time of the election and are still registered at the time of signing the petition, although not necessarily in the Member's district, are entitled to sign. The Committee was of the opinion that recall should be viewed as a "reconsideration" by the electors of the choice they made at the last election.

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- d) More than 40 percent of the eligible voters who were registered in the Member's electoral district at the time of the election must sign the petition in order for it to be successful. (Using today's figures, the required number of verified signatures could vary from a low of 5 800 to a high of 18 470.) The committee had recommended a 50 percent figure, but this was reduced during debate in the committee stage of the Bill. These figures were seen as sufficiently high to protect the public interest in that a Member would not be subject to harassment.
- e) A proponent has 60 days in which to collect the required number of signatures. The proponent may be assisted by volunteers who are registered voters (anywhere in the province) and have been resident in the province for at least six months before registering with the Chief Electoral Officer as canvassers.
- f) Once a petition is submitted, the Chief Electoral Officer has 42 calendar days in which to verify the signatures contained therein. Verification is done by scanning the petition sheets to create digital images. Each petition signer's voter record is searched for on the computerized, permanent provincial voters list. Where a match is found, the signer's digital signature from the petition is visually compared (on a split-screen monitor) with the voter's digital signature on file from the voter-registration application.
- g) If sufficient matches are verified, the proponent's petition-financing report is filed on time, and the expense limit has not been exceeded, the petition is declared successful and the Member ceases to hold office. [Expense limit: base \$25 000; increased by 25 cents for each registered voter in excess of 25 000; and this combined number is again increased, if the population density of the riding is less than two registered voters per square kilometre, by 15 cents times the number of square kilometres, to a maximum increase of 25 percent of the base figure.]
- h) If a vacancy is created, the Chief Electoral Officer notifies both the Member and the Speaker, upon which the Speaker issues a warrant for the issue of a writ of by-election within 90 days.
- i) The recalled Member can be a candidate in the by-election.

## The Implementation of the Act

The 18-month hiatus for Members ended on November 28, 1997, and on that day two applications for recall petitions were filed with the Chief Electoral Officer; one against the Minister of Education, the Hon. Paul Ramsey, and the other against government MLA, Mr. Helmut Giesbrecht. Both Members represent geographically large districts, but with the majority of a stable population base concentrated in one or two communities.

As the government has a three-seat majority, both recall campaigns were seen by some as attempts by interest groups to oust the government by forcing by-elections that the government would supposedly lose. Both proponents put forward the position that the recall campaigns resulted from the Members' performance in their respective electoral districts.

Both campaigns became acrimonious and personal. There were allegations of influence and/or control coming from outside the districts, and there were allegations of voter intimidation. To some degree, there was outside participation, and the pressure felt by some who received letters from union leaders was seen as intimidation. The legislated requirement that the signed petition sheets must be available for public inspection at the end of the verification process was also seen as an intimidation factor.

The petition against the backbencher was withdrawn on the last day of the petition period (February 3, 1998), as the proponent claimed to have fallen some 1 500 signatures short of the number required. Rather than submit the signatures that had been canvassed, the proponent burned the petition sheets to prevent public inspection.

The petition against the Minister of Education was submitted on the February 3, 1998, due date. The line-by-line signature count determined that the petition contained 8 323 unverified signatures, 585 signatures short of the threshold number of verified signatures required. Consequently, the Chief Electoral Officer declared the petition unsuccessful, and no signature verification was undertaken.

The proponent sought a judicial review of the basis upon which the 40 percent threshold was established. In November 1998, the proponent announced his intention to withdraw his petition, and in December 1998, filed a Notice of Discontinuance, following disclosure by the New Democratic Party that their analysis of the recall petition sheets indicated only 6 521 possibly valid signatures.

## Mocking the Legislation

Five subsequent recall petitions were issued between December 12, 1997, and January 27, 1998, including one against the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Gordon Campbell, and a second against the Minister of Education. These were seen by the public as frivolous attempts to mock the legislation. For example, two reasons stated for recalls were: "We can't blame everything on El Niño", and "they desire recall so they may elect someone less boring". None of these attempts went further than the issuance of the petitions.

The seventh petitioner was more aggressive. The petition was against a government MLA, Ms. Evelyn Gillespie, in a semi-urban district. The Member contended that the recall was the result of a personal issue, claiming that the proponent was not satisfied with the Member's position vis-à-vis a child custody dispute in which the proponent was

involved. The proponent contended that the recall was the result of the Member's failure to adequately convey the wishes of her constituents to government. The proponent was required to collect more than 17 048 valid signatures. Rather than organize a door-to-door canvass for signatures, the proponent relied on people to drop in at one of a few sign-up locations in the district. At the conclusion of the petition period, the proponent claimed the campaign had collected some 10 000 signatures but he declined to submit the signature sheets to the Chief Electoral Officer and opted to destroy them.



Photo: John Yampship/Vision West

A recall campaign organizer, Mark Robinson, gives boxes of petitions to Cassandra McClarnon at the reception desk of Elections BC.

## An MLA Resigns

The eighth petition was initiated after a community newspaper disclosed that an opposition MLA, Mr. Paul Reitsma, had penned a number of letters to the editor using fictitious names in which he criticized opponents and praised himself. Mr. Reitsma first denied doing so, but upon disclosure of additional material, he finally admitted to the authorship. This brought forward calls for the Member's resignation from many quarters, but Mr. Reitsma refused and the recall application followed after days.

The proponent was required to collect more than 17 020 signatures of registered voters. A very well co-ordinated campaign in the semi-urban electoral district, with the help of over 190 canvassers, was able to collect 25 470 signatures in the 60 days. The Member did not undertake any campaign in support of himself.

Upon the initial processing of the signature sheets, it was determined that there were 17 318 exact matches between names on the petition and the voters list, before signature verification. Another 2 945 names were identified as possible matches and the remaining 5 207 names did not have any immediately matching voter records.

Within a day of the start of the signature verification process, before the first set of signatures was verified, the Member tendered his resignation. Upon confirmation of the Member's resignation, there now being no Member to recall, in keeping with the intent of the Act and consistent with common sense, signature verification was halted.

Although the Member was not officially recalled under the legislation, the initial processing of the material submitted by the proponent clearly indicated that, had the Member not resigned, he would have been recalled.

In the late summer of 1998, allegations were published in provincial news media from an informant who claimed that there were unreported contributions and expenditures by the Members' anti-recall campaigns in Prince George North, Skeena and Comox Valley. On the heels of the published allegations, a third recall petition was launched against the Minister of Education, although no direct reference was made to the allegations in the proponent's statement of reasons for the recall. Issued October 7, this petition, too, was withdrawn on the return date of December 7. Again, citing media reports, 7 838 signatures had been gathered, about 1 000 less than the 8 908 verified signatures required to force a by-election.

## Forensic Audits

As a result of the published allegations, on September 18, 1998, forensic accountant Ron Parks was engaged to conduct an investigation into the financial reporting of all recall participants from the three electoral districts. Prior to being made public on March 18, 1999, a draft of the report was provided to the RCMP and a special prosecutor was appointed by the Criminal Justice Branch of British Columbia's Ministry of the Attorney General. The decision was made not to proceed with administrative penalties or criminal prosecutions.

Although the investigation had identified recall activities by individuals and organizations other than authorized participants, Mr. Parks and the special prosecutor indicated that portions of the *Recall and Initiative Act* were difficult to interpret or subject to misinterpretation. Most errors identified in the financing reports were minor in nature; however, a number of authorized participants were required to submit supplemental financial reports to ensure full disclosure of contributions and expenditures.

The auditor and special prosecutor also indicated that the unique and untested nature of the legislation may have contributed to the errors and misunderstandings. Accordingly, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia is taking steps to ensure better understanding of and compliance with the Act, and will, in addition, table with the Legislature a report on the recall process.

## Community Support Is Vital

The experience of these recalls seems to indicate that a great deal of community support is required for a campaign to be successful. It cannot be a strictly political exercise by one faction to unseat a member of another faction; there must be wide support across the political spectrum. 🗳️

# AGNES MACPHAIL:

## *The First Woman Elected to Canada's House of Commons*

WAYNE BROWN, CO-EDITOR, ELECTORAL INSIGHT, ELECTIONS CANADA

*"Do not rely completely on any other human being,  
however dear. We meet all life's greatest tests alone."*

– Agnes Macphail

In the 1921 federal general election, fifty-four years after Confederation, Agnes Macphail made history by becoming the first woman elected to Canada's House of Commons. That election was the first in which all Canadian women (at least 21 years of age) had the right to vote and to stand as candidates. While the suffragette movement had opened the door for Macphail, it was her own determination and the voters of the rural Ontario riding of Grey South East that put her in the Commons. She would be re-elected to Parliament four times and serve for more than eighteen years. Later, she would be one of the first two women elected to the Ontario legislature.

Macphail did not come from a family of wealth or great influence. She was a farmer's daughter and a country schoolteacher. She did not run for one of the old mainline political parties. She never got elected on the

coattails of a popular leader of a national party. Macphail started out wanting to represent the interests of the farmers of her region and to seek equality for women. Later, she would also champion the rights of miners and prisoners and play a role in the political negotiations that led to the 1926 introduction of old-age pensions in Canada.

Agnes Campbell Macphail was born of Scottish descent in a three-room log house on March 24, 1890, in Proton Township in Grey County, in Ontario's rural Protestant heartland. She was the eldest of three daughters. At the age of 14, although she was a bright student and wanted very much to be a schoolteacher, it appeared her formal education was over. Her parents felt they could not afford the tuition and board for her to attend the high school in Owen Sound and needed her to work on the family farm.

In his book, *Agnes Macphail and the Politics of Equality*, Terry Crowley wrote, "the teenager brooded incessantly over the cruel fate she suffered by being born female .... Even as a youth Agnes was resentful that women's life cycles were governed by child-birth. Was it not possible, she wondered, for women to live their own individual lives as complete persons in addition to bearing children or in place of their maternal role?"

It took her two years, but Agnes finally convinced her family to let her go to high school and she made up for lost time by graduating in half the normal time. She became captain of the girls' basketball team and led discussions in the Literary Society. The biography *Ask No Quarter* describes her as "a rather tall, slim girl at that time, with high colouring and bright eyes and, as always, very attractive to boys." But the town girls mocked Macphail's plain country

Photo: Comstock Photofile/Yousaf Karsh



The unveiling of a commemorative bust of Agnes Macphail in the Parliament Buildings in March 1955. Pictured, left to right, are: Margaret Aiken, Member of Parliament; Charlotte Whitton, Mayor of Ottawa; Cairine Wilson, the first woman appointed to Canada's Senate; and Secretary of State Ellen Fairclough, Canada's first female cabinet minister. The commemorative bust is located in the antechamber of the House of Commons.

resses and, for the first time, she felt different and alone.

Agnes Macphail went to normal school in Stratford and then taught at several rural, one-room schools. She brought the books of another Grey County native, Nellie McClung, into the classroom, so the students could learn about her campaign for women's rights. (For more on McClung, see the June 1999 edition of *Electoral Insight*.) One of her schools was in Kinloss, Ontario, and it was there that Macphail discovered politics. She lived with the owners of a store, where the local Liberals and Tories dropped in to debate the major issues of that time, trade and tariffs. The 1911 election was fought on the question of reciprocity with the United States. Canadians were bitterly divided. When the Borden Conservatives replaced the Laurier Liberals, farmers felt their hopes for lower tariffs and more markets for their products had been shattered too. That election made a deep impression on Macphail, and she became increasingly

convinced that farmers could not rely on the existing parties and must take political action themselves.

Her intense interest in farm politics led her to become an organizer for the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO). Her early speeches championed the farmers' cause. "There is only one thing that will check the movement [of farmers from the land] and that is stated in one word, and that word is MONEY. Farmers work 12 hours a day to feed people who work eight hours and still some people call that a square deal. Farmers occupy the same position today economically that the Indian did years ago in trading his furs at the Hudson's Bay post. The dealer, not the producer, fixes the price, both in buying and selling." Her parents were said to be appalled with her new public role, but that didn't stop Agnes Macphail.

A local newspaper first suggested Macphail would make the best representative for Grey South East at the next federal election. But the *Durham Review* also

reported that "the idea of a woman sitting in the House of Commons was so new to them that at first some of her most ardent admirers laughed." On September 26, 1921, a farm-labour convention was held in Durham Town Hall, to choose the UFO candidate for Grey South East. Of the two dozen nominees, Macphail was the only female and there was only one woman among all the voting delegates from across the riding. Agnes was a much better speaker than most of her competitors. She won on the seventh ballot. When she reported her victory to her father, his reaction over the telephone was simply, "I am sorry." The morning after, there were many second thoughts. The riding executive eventually asked Macphail to give up the nomination, so a man could run instead. As always, she stood firm and refused.

At the 1921 federal general election, there were 235 ridings in Canada. Only four women ran. None represented the major Liberal or Conservative parties. Macphail's campaign fund totalled about \$600, mostly from one-dollar donations. She made no special play for the votes of women. Rather, her fiery speeches, which drew large crowds, were mostly about the plight of farmers and other workers. Meanwhile, from the pulpit, some local Protestant preachers attacked the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, of which Macphail was a member. At the time, it was understood that most women of the riding did not vote for Macphail. The men must have, because she won with the largest plurality in the history of the riding (almost 2 600 votes). The three female candidates in other ridings were not elected.

Macphail was 31 years old when first elected to Parliament and younger than most MPs. She had never been to Ottawa before and, after seeing the Parliament Buildings, said, "they were all I imagined and more. My devotion to Canada was so great, and my nerves so taut at the time, that tears sprang to my eyes." On March 8, 1922,

at the opening of the First Session of Canada's 14th Parliament, Macphail took her seat in the House of Commons. The other 234 members were all men. In recognizing the precedent Agnes Macphail represented, the Speaker began, "Madam; Fellow Members of the House of Commons ..."

The 1921 election made history in another way, as well. For the first time, the Liberals and Conservatives no longer held all the seats in the Commons. Sixty-four Progressives were sent to Parliament, nearly all of them farmers from Ontario and the West. Macphail sat with them in the Commons. The Progressives saw themselves not as a political party, but as a group of independents participating in a revolution against the two old parties, which, they charged, were dominated by the interests of business and the wealthy.

These newcomers to Ottawa advocated group government in which legislators would make laws through co-operation and without having to follow partisan lines. While they had the second-largest block of seats in the Commons, the Progressives refused to be the Official Opposition.

Macphail's seat was in the front row, but far down on the opposition side. On her first day in the Commons, there were red roses on her desk. But they were actually a prank. Someone was now paying off on an earlier bet that she would not win her riding. In the early months, the newspapers paid excessive attention to her, often ridiculing how she looked and dressed. She resented it when

Cabinet ministers replied to her as the first "lady" member. She wanted to be addressed as the "Member for Grey South East," in the same manner as the men were acknowledged. With the eyes of the curious always on her, she sought ways to escape. Instead of using the parliamentary dining room, she began taking her meals elsewhere.

The biography *Ask No Quarter* says Macphail confessed she was intensely unhappy amid "subtle indications everywhere that the men thought she should have stayed at home. Her reaction was peculiarly her own. She felt the offence deeply, and she fought back. Her tongue took on an edge. She behaved with more asperity than grace." Doris Pennington, in her book *Agnes Macphail: Reformer*, quotes Agnes as saying "when I was first elected, everything I said was wrong; everything I wore was wrong, everything I did

was wrong, to hear comments about them. Bouquets were not thrown at me because I was the only woman in the House. Brickbats were what I got."

Later, as Agnes Macphail became more accustomed to the workings of Parliament and the other members got used to her, she formed many strong and lasting friendships, including some with members of other political stripes.

For the first fourteen of her years in Parliament, Macphail's was the only female voice there. She was rumoured on several occasions to have been offered a Cabinet post by Prime Minister Mackenzie King, if she or the Progressives would join his

Liberals. But she preferred to keep her independence and not have to follow the official line of a governing party.

And what did she accomplish in almost two decades on the opposition benches? Macphail constantly challenged the dominant assumption of the time that women were destined only to be wives and mothers. She pushed for gender equality and believed it could best be achieved through social and economic reforms. She fought for equal pay for equal work and opposed minimum wage laws for women. She usually opposed anything that she thought represented special treatment for women.

In her first major speech in the Commons, Macphail opposed an amendment to the *Dominion Elections Act* intended to give voting privileges to foreign women married to Canadian citizens. To her, the women were being treated as appendages to their husbands. "I think what women really want today is perfect equality with men," Macphail told the Commons.

The Depression brought many attempts to return women to their homes and let their jobs and wages go to men. Some saw these efforts as a cure for unemployment. Macphail was adamantly opposed and stated that a "woman's place in the modern working world cannot just be considered in terms of economics, but of her mental happiness, which is a vital and fundamental need of every individual."

Macphail became popular as a public speaker. She went on the university circuit and travelled to Montreal to assist in the battle for provincial suffrage in Quebec. She often visited American cities to lecture on women in politics, currency reform and the relations between Canada and the U.S. She encouraged other women to follow her in public life.

In the 1925 election, the Conservatives won a few more seats than the Liberals, but neither had enough to form a majority government. Mackenzie King courted the



In the early months, the newspapers paid excessive attention to her, often ridiculing how she looked and dressed.

support of the Progressives (who had been reduced to only 24 seats). What the Progressives wanted most was legislation to provide old-age pensions. King agreed. Macphail met regularly with a government committee to help draft the *Old Age Pensions Act*, which became Canada's first major social assistance legislation. It would provide \$20 per month to Canadians over seventy years of age who passed a means test.

Macphail worked hard over the years to help establish many farm co-operatives. She invested money in several and served on their boards of directors. She felt the co-operatives were a practical means for rural Canadians to wrest economic power away from the interests of big business in the cities. In the early 1930s, as the Great Depression worsened, Macphail helped found the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) of farm and labour groups (which later became the New Democratic Party). She saw it as a new beginning for them, but she always regarded as unrealistic the ideological views of the militant, left-wing elements of the coalition. Later, as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture was being set up, she argued that more than a million farmers needed such an organization to get favourable legislation enacted.

One might think that the farmers' representative from Grey County, Ontario, would have little interest in the coal miners of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Not so. Macphail had heard of the pay cuts that led to strikes and violence between the miners and police, sometimes even involving women and children. She went personally to Glace Bay to investigate and was shocked to find the impoverished and unsanitary conditions in



*Grey County, Ontario gave Canada two of its most successful female pioneers. Nellie McClung, who would become the country's leading women's rights activist of her time, was born near Owen Sound in 1873. Seventeen years later in nearby Proton Township, Agnes Macphail was born. Macphail read McClung's books to her schoolchildren. Both were first elected in 1921: Nellie to the Alberta Legislature, Agnes to the House of Commons. The two became good friends and met frequently in Ottawa.*

which the miners and their families lived. Macphail returned to the Commons to forcefully demand the government take action and rail against what she saw as the government's "pampering of industry and neglect of humanity."

In her second term in Parliament, Macphail repeatedly spoke out against the conditions in which penitentiary inmates lived. Shacklings, beatings and long periods in solitary confinement were common. Outside investigations that called for reform were usually shelved. There was very little public sympathy for her concerns and some other MPs vilified her calls for action. But Macphail continued to argue that the penitentiary system was a failure because it provided no opportunities for inmates to reform and lead productive lives upon their release.

When she went to Kingston Penitentiary to see the conditions for herself, at the gate she was told no ladies were allowed inside.

"I'm no lady, I'm an MP," Macphail protested, and she became the first woman to tour the infamous facility. Finally, the Commons passed her motion for a work program to keep prisoners usefully occupied and offset the cost of prisons. Macphail also helped form the Elizabeth Fry Society to rehabilitate female prisoners.

In 1936, after more than a dozen riots within the walls of several penitentiaries, Macphail's persistence finally resulted in the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the penal system. It recommended a complete reorganization, which continues to benefit inmates even today.

Macphail was a staunch supporter of the League of Nations and international disarmament.

In 1929, she was a member of the Canadian delegation to the League's 10th assembly in Geneva. She served on its disarmament committee, the first woman to do so. As a vocal peace activist, she experienced one of the most agonizing periods of her career when she decided she had to vote in support of Canada's declaration of war in September 1939. She reasoned it would be even worse not to oppose Hitler.

Macphail held her seat in Parliament until the election of March 1940. This time, it seemed the deck was stacked against her. The country was at war and Canadians had been asked to unite behind Mackenzie King's government. In the election campaign, the Liberals and Conservatives used Macphail's many previous anti-war statements against her. She faced a strong Liberal challenger. She had also become more distant from some members of her riding executive. On voting day, after many heavy snowstorms, the country roads were blocked



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by huge drifts. The farm vote fell sharply. The Liberals won a sweeping majority. In her Grey–Bruce riding, Agnes finished third.

While there were several reasons for her defeat, Macphail seemed to take it as a personal rejection by the voters. With no income, she felt financially insecure, a fear that is said to have haunted her for the rest of her life. She ran unsuccessfully for the United Reform Party in a by-election in Saskatoon. She hoped for a job in the federal civil service or with one of the farm co-operatives that she had earlier helped establish. None was offered. Finally, for about a year, she wrote an agricultural column for the *Globe and Mail*. That kept her name in front of the public. She was nominated as a provincial CCF candidate in York East and, in 1943, she shared the distinction of being one of the first two women elected to the Ontario legislature. Macphail was defeated in 1945, but returned to the legislature in the election of 1948, with the largest number of votes gained by any provincial candidate in Ontario's history. In 1951, she fought her last political campaign and went down to defeat along with most of the provincial CCF candidates. Over three decades, Macphail had won seven elections and lost four.

Macphail never married. At one time in her youth, she was engaged but the relationship broke off. Later, a fellow member of Parliament, Preston Elliott, courted her but she turned down his marriage proposal. Another parliamentarian who is said to have fallen in love with Macphail was Robert Gardiner, who would later be president of the United Farmers of Alberta. She seriously considered marrying him but decided against it.

She cherished her independence and political life and didn't want anything conflicting with them. The newspapers frequently pointed out she was still single and portrayed her as a strict and loveless

spinster schoolteacher. She hated the image and to disprove it, she gave some of her love letters to the National Archives.

After Macphail lost her seat in the Ontario legislature, a campaign began to convince Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent to appoint her to the Senate, even though she had despised the unelected body and said it should be abolished. Friends felt Agnes now deserved the personal security of a senate seat. Women's organizations, newspapers and a majority of Canadians (according to a 1952 poll) supported the idea. The Prime Minister was reluctant but, apparently, eventually decided to announce her appointment in the spring of 1954. If so, it was too late, because on February 11, 1954, at the age of 63, Macphail suffered a heart attack and died two days later in Wellesley Hospital in Toronto. She was laid to rest beside her parents in a cemetery in Priceville, Ontario, back home in Grey County.

Author Doris Pennington in *Agnes Macphail: Reformer* describes Macphail and her many contributions. "She came armed with youthful idealism, strong opinions and a stubborn independent streak, determined to set Parliament on its ear if necessary to get a fair deal for farmers and women in particular. Alone, she faced the scorn of members and learned to give a little better than she got. She fought for peace in an age that glorified war. She fought for reform – economic, social, prison and parliamentary. She earned the reward of most reformers: abuse. Nevertheless, when she died it was widely recognized that there had been little good social legislation in the past thirty years in which she had not played a part."

The pioneering achievements of Agnes Macphail have inspired many Canadian women to follow her example. Though they are still in the minority on the campaign trail and in Parliament, there were more than 400 women candidates in each of the

two most recent general elections. In 1993, 53 women were elected. At the subsequent 1997 election, women won 62 of the 301 seats in Parliament. 🇨🇦

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The family name was actually MacPhail. Sometime around 1925, after her election to Parliament, Agnes began spelling it with a small "p", because she felt it was easier to write that way. On the family tombstone at Priceville, it is spelled without the "a".

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Electoral News in Brief

## ELECTORAL REFORM

On October 14, 1999, the Honourable Don Boudria, Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, tabled Bill C-2, *An Act respecting the election of members of the House of Commons, repealing other Acts relating to elections and making consequential amendments to other Acts.*<sup>1</sup>

This Bill represents the Government's response to the 35th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs which had undertaken an in-depth review of electoral law. The Committee, which began its review on November 20, 1997, examined various reports, including those of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing of 1991, the Special Committee of the House of Commons on Electoral Reform in 1993, and the 1996 and 1997 reports of the Chief Electoral Officer. The Committee tabled its report on June 11, 1998.

Bill C-2 proposes a number of changes. Notably, it introduces a clearer structure and modernizes the original Act's language. For instance, the Bill incorporates provisions dealing with disputed elections, which were formerly embodied in legislation dating from the turn of the century, namely, the *Dominion Controverted Elections Act*. Furthermore, certain Acts concerning disqualification from voting that were judged obsolete are to be repealed: the *Disfranchising Act* and the *Corrupt Practices Inquiries Act*.

Bill C-2 also proposes changes in the provisions governing the financing of political parties and candidates during elections. It includes new provisions dealing with publicity during elections and election opinion polls, to address recent court decisions on these subjects. Finally, it should be noted that the Bill creates a system for regulating the election advertising expenses of third party intervenors.

Following its first reading, Bill C-2 was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

<sup>1</sup>First tabled under number C-83 during the first session of the 36th Parliament.



Photo: Jean Boag

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF ELECTORS

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF ELECTORS

During the summer of 1999, the Chief Electoral Officer established a forum for discussing best practices in database management and use, in the form of an Advisory Committee to the National Register of Electors that involves key Canadian stakeholders at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels. The committee met for the first time on September 8, 1999, at Elections Canada's office in Ottawa.

Since the establishment of the National Register of Electors in 1997, more than 20 agreements have been negotiated with registrars of motor vehicles and vital statistics, and with provincial electoral agencies having permanent voters lists, for the provision of data to maintain the Register. In return, federal electoral data has been shared with some 60 jurisdictions to produce lists of electors.

Elections Canada recognizes the importance of ongoing consultation with both data suppliers and other electoral agencies about the challenges of maintaining electoral databases, and the manner in which electoral lists produced from these databases are used during electoral events.

### The Mandate of the Advisory Committee

- To gain a more thorough understanding of the business of the partners and suppliers, and to discuss best practices in data management with a view to co-operative exploration of avenues for improving the timeliness and quality of data in use.
- To bring to the table new initiatives in the area of data management, with a view to improving the currency of client databases and address information, and to eliminating duplication of effort.
- To discuss issues of privacy and security, with a view to protecting individual privacy as required under federal and provincial/territorial legislation.

### Membership and Activities

The membership of the Advisory Committee is drawn from national organizations representing the supplier community, the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (motor vehicle registrars) and the Vital Statistics Council for Canada (vital statistics registrars); and from the user community, including representatives from provincial/territorial electoral agencies and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

On October 18, 1999, at the Olympic Plaza in Calgary, Their Excellencies Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, and John Ralston Saul unveiled a monument to honour Canada's Famous Five women on the 70th anniversary of the *Persons Case*. Twelve-year-old student Shawnee Price was chosen for the honour of being the first to sit in the chair next to the statue of Famous Five leader Emily Murphy. (For more on the Famous Five, see *Electoral Insight*, June 1999.)

At the inaugural meeting, members of the Committee introduced their organizations, with particular reference to their role in managing client databases, discussed the Committee's mandate and suggested topics and issues for discussion at future meetings. There was a presentation and discussion about Elections Canada's proposed corporate policy on sharing initiatives, which emerged from experience to date and addresses Elections Canada's proposed approach to the scope, policy-making, working definitions, operations, accountability, and financial practices for data sharing and data supply involving other jurisdictions.

The Advisory Committee will meet twice yearly, with the next meeting scheduled for the spring of 2000. Between formal meetings, Elections Canada's Interjurisdictional Co-operation Unit will support the business of the Committee.

## ANNUAL LIST OF ELECTORS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES

On October 15, 1999, in accordance with section 71.013 of the *Canada Elections Act*, the 1999 annual list of electors produced from the National Register of Electors was sent to members of Parliament and registered political parties. This list of electors' names and addresses reflected updates from federal, provincial and territorial data sources, as well as elector-initiated requests for registrations, changes and opt-outs. It also included the most current lists available to Elections Canada at this time of Canadian Forces electors, Canadian citizens temporarily residing outside Canada, and incarcerated electors. The information can only be used for electoral purposes.

## REVENUE CANADA CONSENT RATE CLIMBS

The percentage of taxfilers consenting on their 1998 tax returns to the transfer of their names, addresses and dates of birth to Elections Canada for updating the National Register of Electors has risen to 83 percent. This compares to just under 80 percent for the 1997 tax year, which was the first year of the joint Elections Canada-Revenue Canada initiative.

## NATIONAL ELECTION FOR THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH

This autumn, thousands of Canadian students had an unprecedented experience, learning about their rights and voting as they participated in the first National Election for the Rights of Youth. UNICEF Canada and Elections Canada invited every primary and secondary school in the country to register, using the Internet. Students under the age of eighteen voted in their schools during the third week of November. The election marked the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ten rights drawn from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child appeared, in alphabetical order, as "candidates" on the ballot. The students each voted for the one right that they feel is the most important to them, as individuals and as members of their families and their communities. The "candidates" included the rights to: education, family, food and shelter, health, name and nationality, non-discrimination, own culture, protection from harm, rest and play, and share opinions.

UNICEF Canada's key aims for the election were to heighten understanding of and commitment to children's rights, and to offer Canadian children an opportunity to speak out about them. Elections Canada has a legislated mandate to provide public education and information programs.

It sought to promote an understanding of Canada's electoral process among youth, to help prepare them to vote in elections when they reach the legislated voting age. "This historic experience will give them a greater sense of the democratic process and the responsibilities that go along with it," said Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley.

The election included its own Web site, which provided background information and a teachers guide. All registered schools also received a kit of election materials, which included a ballot box, ballots and voting screen.

The results of the youth vote were submitted to Elections Canada in Ottawa for counting. Anyone interested in seeing the students' preferences may visit the Web site at [www.itsyourvoice.com](http://www.itsyourvoice.com).



## GEOREFERENCING: PUTTING ELECTORS' ADDRESSES ON THE MAP

Elections Canada and Statistics Canada have developed a digital national road network, the National Geographic Database (NGD), for electoral and census purposes. With this database, Elections Canada will be able to use electors' addresses to determine their electoral district and polling division. The new database will also make the National Register of Electors more accessible to other electoral jurisdictions in Canada that have different electoral boundaries. They will be able to superimpose their own electoral districts on the road network and relate these to elector data from the Register. Using National Register of Electors data in place of enumeration can generate significant savings for electoral agencies in the provinces and municipalities.

The geographic database itself, without the data from the National Register of Electors, will be more widely available also to other levels of government. Provincial and municipal agencies will be able to adapt data from the digital road network to reflect their own "service/business areas", such as school districts, evacuation zones or social service areas. Sharing this data has the potential to provide large savings for public and private agencies throughout Canada.

The recent work has merged Statistics Canada's Street Network File and boundaries, Elections Canada's electoral map files, and thousands of new roads, road names and address ranges. This merged data has been fitted to Natural Resources Canada's National Topographic Data Base, which is the Canadian standard for geographical information.

As new electors are added to the National Register of Electors or as electors move to new addresses, Elections Canada will be able to identify where each elector's address is located on the national road network and, in turn, which electoral district and polling division contains the elector's residence. These processes are known as *georeferencing* and *geo-coding*. Elections Canada is currently georeferencing the addresses already in the National Register of Electors and will do so with new addresses as they are added.

## A HISTORY OF THE VOTE IN CANADA ON THE INTERNET



On October 28, 1999, Elections Canada, in cooperation with the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, launched a presentation on the Internet about the history of the vote in Canada. The Web site tells the fascinating story of some of the main events and people that

influenced the development of democracy in Canada. The site's contents are based on a book published by Elections Canada in 1997, entitled *A History of the Vote in Canada*. The book, which was prepared by a team of historians, political scientists and other electoral experts, traces the historical development of the right to vote during more than two centuries in this country. The Web module is available for the public to view on the Museum's Web site at <http://www.civilization.ca/membs/canhist/progrese.html>. It is also displayed for visitors to the museum on monitors in the Social Progress Web Gallery located in the Canada Hall.

## POLITICAL PARTY FISCAL PERIOD RETURNS FOR 1998

Elections Canada has published a searchable database of the contributions received and expenses incurred by the registered political parties for the 1998 fiscal year. The data is available from the Elections Canada Web site at [http://www.elections.ca/gen\\_info/finance\\_e.html](http://www.elections.ca/gen_info/finance_e.html) and is drawn from the parties' returns for last year, as reported to the Chief Electoral Officer.

All ten federal political parties registered during 1998 submitted returns. They are: Bloc Québécois, Canadian Action Party, Christian Heritage Party of Canada, The Green Party of Canada, Liberal Party of Canada, Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada, Natural Law Party of Canada, New Democratic Party, Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, and Reform Party of Canada.

Users may search the data on-line or download the full list of contributors for each party. The contributions listed are those that exceed \$100. Searches can be based on the name of the contributor or the political party. Of all the contributions to political parties, the highest amount was almost \$115 000 and the average was \$513.

There is no limit to the amount of money a registered party may receive as a contribution. However, the *Canada Elections Act* stipulates that contributions may be accepted only from Canadian citizens or permanent residents, corporations or associations doing business in Canada and trade unions that hold bargaining rights for employees in Canada.

The registered political parties' fiscal period returns for 1997 are also available in downloadable form from the Elections Canada Web site at [http://www.elections.ca/gen\\_info/fiscals/1997/index\\_e.html](http://www.elections.ca/gen_info/fiscals/1997/index_e.html)

## MANY PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL ELECTIONS

1999 has been an unusually busy year for provincial and territorial elections in Canada. Voters went to the polls in six provinces. Add to that the April election in the new eastern Arctic territory of Nunavut and this December's general election in the geographically reduced Northwest Territories, the first since Nunavut was created.

The most recent provincial election saw the New Democrats led by Gary Doer capture a majority of the 57 seats and replace the Conservatives as the Government in Manitoba. Gary Filmon had been the Premier for eleven years. Also in September, Premier Roy Romanow's Saskatchewan New Democrats were reduced from a majority to a minority position in the 58-seat legislature.

Earlier in the year, provincial elections were held in June in Ontario and New Brunswick, and in February in Newfoundland.

A July election in Nova Scotia produced a new Conservative government and an unusual result in one electoral district. After several counts in Shelburne, there was a tie between two candidates, which the returning officer was required to break. One of the two names was picked out of a cardboard box. The Tory candidate was the winner and a Liberal Cabinet minister was the unlucky loser.

## FOUR NOVEMBER BY-ELECTIONS

By-elections were held in four federal electoral districts on Monday, November 15, 1999. All four seats in the House of Commons were retained by the political parties that previously held them. Candidates for the Liberal Party of Canada won three of the by-elections by large margins, while the New Democratic Party candidate was victorious in the fourth riding. It was the largest number of by-elections on the same day since six occurred simultaneously in March of 1996. (Since the last general election in 1997, there have been three other by-elections, each held on different dates.)

Two of the recent by-elections were in Quebec. Liberal Irwin Cotler was victorious in Mount Royal, while Liberal Marcel Proulx won in Hull—Aylmer. The Ontario district of York West elected Liberal Judy Sgro. New Democrat Dennis Gruending won the by-election in the Saskatchewan district of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. The voting results returned the Liberals to their previous position, holding 157 of the 301 seats in Parliament.

No enumeration was required for these by-elections, because of the creation of the National Register of Electors in 1997. 

# Electoral Facts

WAYNE BROWN, ELECTIONS CANADA

As this century ends,  
almost all adult  
Canadians have the  
right to vote. Since  
Confederation, the  
federal franchise has  
expanded greatly.



**1867** Only a small minority of the population had the right to vote. At the first general election after Confederation, only men 21 years of age and over who met certain property qualifications could vote and be candidates in a federal election. All women, Status Indians and members of some religious denominations were excluded. Canada consisted of only four provinces (Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick), represented by 181 members of Parliament. The right to vote was not laid down in federal law. In Canada's early decades, the franchise laws of each province applied to federal elections in that province. In certain provinces, this denied the franchise to particular groups, such as immigrants from Japan, China and India.

**1885** Parliament established a federal franchise based on property ownership. Its application differed from town to town and from province to province. Aboriginal people living in certain parts of Canada had the right to vote.

**1917** Parliament passed the *Wartime Elections Act* and the *Military Voters Act*. During a time when conscription was a major issue, the right to vote was extended to all British subjects, male or female, who were active or retired members of the armed forces, including Indian persons and persons under 21 years of age. Civilian men who were not landowners, but who had a son or grandson in the armed forces, were also temporarily granted the franchise, as were women with a father, mother, husband, son, daughter, brother or sister then serving, or who had previously served in the Canadian forces. At the December election, about 2 000 military nurses became the first Canadian women to vote at the federal level.

**1918** Royal assent was given to a bill that extended to all Canadian women at least 21 years of age the right to vote in federal elections, provided they were not alien-born and met property requirements in the provinces that had such rules. (The next year, women also became eligible for election to the House of Commons.)

**1920** Federal electoral law was amended to provide universal female (and male) suffrage regardless of provincial law. British subjects by birth or naturalization were qualified to vote, but certain foreign-born citizens continued to be excluded until 1922. At the 1921 election, for the first time, the number of electors on the lists exceeded 50 percent of the total population.

**1948** The last vestiges of the property qualification, still in use in Quebec, were abolished. The right to vote was extended to Canadians of Asian origin.

**1950** A clause dating back to 1934 disqualifying Eskimos (Inuit) from voting was abolished.

**1960** Passage of a new *Canada Elections Act* removed the disqualification from voting for registered Indians living on reserves. This was partly the result of recognition that many Aboriginal people had served with distinction in the Canadian Forces during the Second World War.



Photo: IFFB Collection, Courtesy Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa

Voter casting his ballot during the 1963 federal election.

**1970** A revised *Canada Elections Act* lowered the voting age and the age of candidacy from 21 years to 18. The right to vote was restricted to Canadian citizens, although British subjects eligible to vote as of June 25, 1968, kept their right to vote until 1975. The new Act also introduced a system of proxy voting for fishermen, seamen, prospectors and full-time students absent from their electoral district. The right to vote in advance was extended to persons with disabilities.

**1982** The new *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* entrenched in the Constitution the right of all citizens to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be candidates. The *Canada Elections Act* specifies that every person who has attained the age of 18 by polling day is qualified as an elector.

**1988** Two separate court rulings gave the right to vote to about 500 federally appointed judges and persons with mental disabilities.

**1993** Parliament passed legislation allowing Canadians to vote by special ballot if they cannot go to their regular or advance poll. This enables students away from their home district, travelling vacationers and business people, and those temporarily outside the country to use their right to vote.

**1999** Almost all Canadian citizens 18 years of age and older are qualified to vote. Among the exceptions are impartial officials responsible for running elections: the Chief Electoral Officer, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, and the returning officers (except when the latter are required to vote to break a tie on a recount). As well, on October 21, 1999, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that inmates serving a sentence of two years or more may no longer vote in federal elections. Almost 20 million Canadians had the right to vote at the most recent federal general election in 1997. Almost all of the remainder of Canada's population were either under the age of 18 or were not Canadian citizens. 🗳️