

The Electoral System of Canada

2nd Edition



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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Elections Canada

The electoral system of Canada

Rev. and augm. ed.

Text in English and French on inverted pages.

Title on added t.p.: Le système électoral du Canada.

English title on previous edition issued in 2001: Canada's electoral system.

ISBN 0-662-69604-2

Cat. No. SE1-5/1-2007

1. Canada. Parliament — Elections.
2. Voting — Canada.
3. Elections — Canada.
 - I. Elections Canada.
 - II. Title: Le système électoral du Canada.
 - III. The electoral system of Canada.

JL193.C32 2007

324.6'0971

C2006-980014-6E

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Printed in Canada

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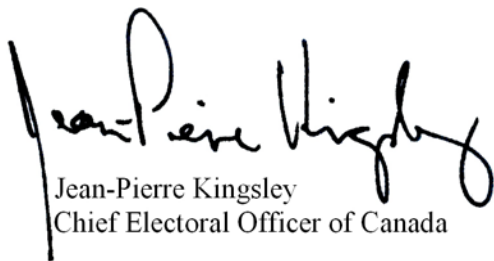
Foreword

Canada's electoral system is the outcome of a 140-year process through which Canadians have progressively overcome exclusions from the franchise and barriers to voting to achieve the universal, constitutionally guaranteed rights to vote and to be a candidate in a legislative election.

At election time, public attention tends naturally to focus on the excitement of the political campaigns, taking for granted the administrative machinery that surrounds and supports voting. Yet the practical measures that ensure access to the franchise – such as multilingual election information, level access at polling stations, mobile polls, special ballots and advance polls – are just as important as the letter of the law in safeguarding the right to vote.

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

Elections Canada's aim is to support the informed participation of every citizen in our country's democratic process. Promoting the values behind our democratic institutions becomes even more significant in light of the declining voter participation generally observed over the last decades. The exercise of the right to vote, which is enshrined in law, would be meaningless if it did not seek to express the informed will of the people.



Jean-Pierre Kingsley
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

February 2007

The political system

What is the foundation of Canada's political system?

The basics

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

The federal Parliament consists of the Senate (upper chamber), which normally has 105 members appointed by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, and the House of Commons (lower chamber), with 308 members elected by citizens who vote in general elections or by-elections. The Government originates in the elected House of Commons. According to the principle of constitutional monarchy, the Queen, therefore, rules but does not govern.

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

Overcoming Canada's geography

Canada's electoral system has evolved in response to the country's geography. Our population, though not large in global terms, is spread over an immense land mass spanning six time zones. As a result, some electoral districts are huge and sparsely populated. Nunavut, for example, sprawls over 2,093,190 square kilometres and serves 26,745 people. In sharp contrast, the smallest electoral district, Papineau in Quebec, occupies only 9 square kilometres, but serves a population of 103,942.

The Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982 set the maximum time between federal general elections at five years, except in time of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection. An election can be called earlier if the Prime Minister so chooses or if the Government is defeated on a motion of confidence in the House of Commons. Parliament is currently (in 2007) examining Bill C-16, which would implement fixed election dates every four years on the third Monday in October, subject to an earlier dissolution of Parliament.

After an election, the party with the most elected representatives normally forms the Government. Its leader becomes the Prime Minister and chooses people (usually members of the House of Commons of his or her party) to head the various government departments under the designation of ministers. The Prime Minister can also appoint ministers without portfolio – known as ministers of State – or members of the Senate to Cabinet.

The leader of the party with the second-largest number of elected representatives acts as the Leader of the Official Opposition.

If the party with the largest number of seats in the House of Commons does not have a simple majority of seats, its leader, the Prime Minister, may attempt to maintain a minority government by seeking strategic support from members who are in the opposition.

Since Confederation in 1867, Canadians have elected 10 minority governments, which lasted 1.4 years on average, and 29 majority governments with an average term of 4.1 years. Appendix 3 provides further details on Canadian governments since Confederation.

Representation in the House of Commons

What role does geography play in democratic representation?

Representation in the House of Commons is based on geographical divisions known as electoral districts, commonly referred to as ridings. The number of electoral districts is established through a formula set out in the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and one member of Parliament (MP) is elected in each electoral district.

Since 1964, independent commissions have been entrusted with adjusting the riding boundaries, based on population changes and other factors. For the 10 provinces, new commissions are set up after every 10-year census to make any necessary revisions to existing boundaries, following the criteria set out in the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*. As the three territories – the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut – constitute a single electoral district each, they have no electoral boundaries to redefine and therefore require no commissions.

The process of redefining electoral boundaries is commonly called redistribution. Elections Canada plans and develops the policies, procedures, manuals and systems needed for the readjustment of electoral boundaries and provides the 10 independent electoral boundaries commissions, one for each province, with technical, administrative, professional, financial and other services to help commissioners carry out their responsibilities under the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*. The commissions' final definition of boundaries are recorded in a representation order. The Representation Order of 2003 set the number of federal electoral districts at 308. Appendix 2 shows the evolution of the number of seats in the House of Commons since 1867.

First past the post

How are candidates elected to Parliament?

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

Any number of candidates may run for election in an electoral district, but a candidate can run in only one riding, either independently or under the banner of a registered political party. Each party may endorse only one candidate in an electoral district.

Candidates who are affiliated with a registered political party can have the name of that party under their name on the ballot. Those who run for election without a party affiliation can choose to have either *Independent* or no inscription under their name on the ballot. On average, around 5 percent of the candidates opt to run with no party affiliation.

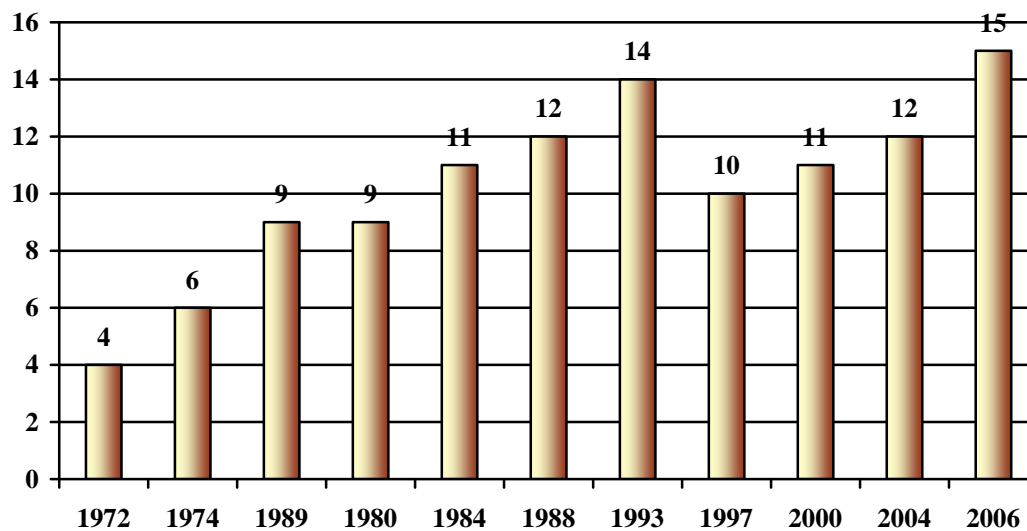
The *Canada Elections Act* defines a political party as an organization one of whose fundamental purposes is to participate in public affairs by endorsing one or more of its members as candidates and supporting their election to the House of Commons. Political parties with objectives that are consistent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

Political parties registered under the *Canada Elections Act* – 39th general election

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

At the 39th general election of January 23, 2006, there were 15 registered political parties, three more than at the 38th general election of June 28, 2004. The graph below shows the evolving number of registered political parties since the 29th general election in 1972, the first held under the registration system for political parties.

**Number of registered political parties
in general elections, from 1972 to 2006**



Pillars of electoral democracy

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

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

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

Participation, fairness and transparency

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

Candidates, nomination contestants, leadership contestants, political parties, electoral district associations and third parties are all subject to strict controls, starting with an obligation to register to gain official status and some associated benefits. All must comply with administrative and legal requirements and must report their revenues, expenses and liabilities to the Chief Electoral Officer, who makes this information available to the public.

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

Over time, various court challenges and judicial decisions related to election expenses limits, and particularly those imposed on third parties, have shown that striking a balance between the values of liberty and equality is a delicate process that is never fully achieved. While some measures governing electoral participants may be perceived as restricting their freedom of expression or association, it is widely accepted that regulations contribute to the proper functioning of a democratic society.

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

Secrecy and privacy

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

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

Adaptability

The success of the Canadian electoral system is due in part to its ability to adapt to changing social circumstances. Canada's electoral laws have evolved and will continue to evolve as Parliament responds to judicial decisions, in light of expanding public expectations and taking advantage of new technologies. Canada's electoral system is a reflection of Canadians' continued concern for fairness and democracy, and Elections Canada's ongoing willingness to support innovation and excellence in delivering federal elections, by-elections and referendums.

Elections Canada

What is Elections Canada and how does it work?

Role, mission and goals

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, also called Elections Canada, is an independent agency set up by Parliament to administer all aspects of federal electoral events. The mission of Elections Canada is to address the needs of electors and parliamentarians innovatively, effectively and professionally, through a fair and open process that is accessible to all Canadians. The Chief Electoral Officer articulates the vision of his Office and communicates it to the public.

Elections Canada's fundamental goals are to be ready to deliver electoral events whenever they may be called, and to keep improving election delivery.

Originally, the Chief Electoral Officer was responsible only for the administration of federal general elections and by-elections. Under the laws that govern federal electoral matters, the mandate has broadened to include national referendums and other important aspects of Canada's democratic system. The Chief Electoral Officer's current responsibilities include:

- making sure that all voters have access to the electoral process through public education and information programs, as well as accessible physical facilities
- maintaining the National Register of Electors
- providing legal, technical, financial and administrative support to the independent commissions that periodically readjust electoral district boundaries
- registering political parties and their electoral district associations, party leadership contestants and third parties
- administering the legislated controls on the financing sources and election expenses of candidates, nomination contestants (those competing for endorsement as a party's candidate in an electoral district), party leadership contestants, registered parties, registered electoral district associations and third parties engaged in election advertising; and examining and disclosing their financial reports
- authorizing the payment of allowances to registered parties, and reimbursing the election expenses of candidates and parties according to formulas set out in the *Canada Elections Act*

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

In addition to the *Canada Elections Act*, the specific laws under which Elections Canada operates are the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the *Constitution Act, 1982* (which includes the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*), the *Referendum Act*, the *Canada Elections Act as Adapted for the Purposes of a Referendum* and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*. The agency is also subject to all laws that apply generally to federal organizations, including the *Financial Administration Act*, the *Public Service Employment Act*, the *Privacy Act*, the *Human Rights Act* and the *Official Languages Act*.¹

At present, Elections Canada consists of a core staff of some 330 employees in Ottawa, but expands to more than 900 people during a general election. The core staff must be highly qualified to maintain a constant high degree of readiness for an election and oversee the hundreds of tasks that have to be carried out to a strict timetable during electoral events.

Professional, non-partisan and independent

A non-partisan electoral management body is the key to an impartial electoral process. Several factors contribute to the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer, including the agency's arm's-length relationship with the government and the budgetary mechanisms that fund its work, which are outlined in greater detail in a later section. The Chief Electoral Officer reports to Parliament and communicates with the Governor in Council through the minister designated for the purposes of the *Canada Elections Act*.

Running an election involves a large number of election officers, from returning officers who are responsible for a whole electoral district, to poll clerks who help voters at every ballot box. Election officers must be politically neutral – they may not favour one political party or candidate over any other.

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

¹ Legislative amendments adopted in 2006 as part of the *Federal Accountability Act* expanded the *Access to Information Act* to cover the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. As of the date of publication, these provisions are not yet in force.

Appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer

The position of Chief Electoral Officer of Canada was created in 1920 in an effort to streamline the conduct of federal elections. The Chief Electoral Officer is appointed by a resolution of the House of Commons. This procedure, based on a simple majority rule, allows all parties represented in the House of Commons to participate in the selection process, adding to the independence of the position. Save for the first Chief Electoral Officer, who was nominated by statute in 1920, all chief electoral officers have been appointed unanimously.

Once appointed, the Chief Electoral Officer may be removed from office only for cause by the Governor General following a joint address of the House of Commons and the Senate. The concurrence of the Senate is a supplementary protection against any form of political interference. The Chief Electoral Officer may serve until the age of 65.

Funding of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

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

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

The Commissioner of Canada Elections

Appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commissioner of Canada Elections has the mandate to ensure that the provisions of the *Canada Elections Act* and the *Referendum Act* are complied with and enforced. Generally speaking, the compliance aspect of the Commissioner's role involves taking corrective action when the law is infringed.

The Commissioner receives complaints and allegations of wrongdoing, determines whether there is a basis for each allegation and may order an investigation. Complaints typically concern infractions such as failure by employers to grant their employees the required time off to vote, improper reporting of financial information and advertising violations. Depending on the gravity of the offence, convictions can result in fines or prison terms. Courts may impose additional penalties, such as performing community service or compensating for damages. A person convicted of certain offences may also lose his or her right to be a candidate in a federal election for five or seven years.

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

A prosecution may begin no later than 5 years after the day on which the Commissioner became aware of the facts of the offence, and no later than 10 years after the day on which the offence was committed.

During an election period, if there is evidence leading the Commissioner to believe that a serious breach of the Act may compromise the fairness of the electoral process, the Commissioner may apply to a court for an injunction. The Commissioner may also conclude a compliance agreement with anyone the Commissioner has reasonable grounds to believe has committed, is about to commit or is likely to commit an offence. This is a voluntary agreement between the Commissioner and the person, in which the person agrees to terms and conditions necessary to ensure compliance with the Act. The Commissioner makes a summary of the compliance agreement public.

The Broadcasting Arbitrator

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

Main activities

What does the agency do to carry out its mandate?

Managing field operations

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

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

Maintaining a permanent register of electors

Since 1997, Elections Canada maintains the National Register of Electors, a permanent list of Canadians who are qualified to vote. The Register contains each elector's name, sex, date of birth, mailing and residential address, electoral district and polling division, and is updated using federal and provincial or territorial data. It currently (in 2007) lists over 23.1 million electors.

The Register is used to produce the preliminary lists of electors and the voter information cards sent to registered electors at the beginning of an election period. The main tasks involved in its management are to:

- update the Register with data from federal, provincial and territorial sources, and information provided by electors during and between elections
- produce updated lists of electors each year for members of Parliament and, if requested, for registered parties
- develop and maintain partnerships with provincial, territorial and municipal electoral commissions to share data and monitor data quality
- coordinate efforts to develop better registration methods

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

The limited information obtained from federal data sources (the Canada Revenue agency and Citizenship and Immigration Canada) may be gathered only with the consent of the elector concerned, and may be used for electoral purposes only. Improper use of electoral information is an offence.

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

In addition to the National Register, Elections Canada also maintains a register of electors who are temporarily living away from Canada; this register includes, among other information, their Canadian and foreign addresses. Once an election is called, some 10,000 Canadian citizens abroad are mailed an application to register for the special ballot and vote by mail.

Electoral geography

Making it possible for some 23 million electors to vote within a 12-hour period is no easy task. To ensure smooth operations, each elector is assigned to one of the more than 65,000 polling divisions across Canada and directed to the polling station nearest his or her place of ordinary residence. Efficient management of this process relies heavily on keeping electoral maps and geographic tools up to date and accurate. Elections Canada carries out various tasks in this area:

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

- It maintains the Electoral Geography Database, which is derived from the National Geographic Database and contains cartographic representations of federal electoral districts, with all polling divisions and advance polling districts. This database is used for creating the thousands of maps necessary for elections. It is also used to assign voters to the correct electoral districts and polling divisions based on their addresses. This process is known as “georeferencing”; it provides precise geographic coordinates with links to Elections Canada’s geographic databases.
- It plans and maintains the digitized Geographic Information System to produce both printed and digital electoral maps, as well as a variety of other geography-related documents.
- It provides technical support and digitized mapping tools to the electoral boundaries commissions.

Digitized mapping

Digital cartography is used to display election information on computerized maps. The agency’s geographic databases provide the framework for locating electors on the National Register of Electors inside an electoral district and assigning them to a polling division (“geocoding”) and for readjusting electoral boundaries after a decennial census. Political parties receive computer-readable versions of electoral maps, as well as access to the related Web application, GeoExplore, which also assists returning officers in managing elections in their electoral districts.

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

Operational and strategic planning

Elections Canada must be ready at all times to deliver an electoral event, whether it be a by-election, a general election or a federal referendum. To maintain this state of readiness, the agency plans and coordinates all of its activities thoroughly, and ensures that it is able to adjust quickly as political events unfold.

Elections Canada has developed numerous customized planning tools to prepare for upcoming electoral events and manage the timely deployment of services at the issue of the writs. A typical electoral event readiness plan charts more than 800 high-level, interrelated activities that must all be completed before an election. Advanced management information systems help to monitor the progress of an electoral event, at both national and local levels, against pre-set targets and benchmarks.

Strategic planning is also important to coordinate the development of longer-term organizational strategies that address emerging national trends and improve election management.

Providing legal services

Considering the legal environment that surrounds and defines the mandate of Elections Canada, the agency must have built-in capacity for interpreting electoral laws and supplying legal advice. In dealing with electors, as well as with the various political entities, the agency must be able to:

- advise the Chief Electoral Officer on legislative proposals and on the interpretation of the electoral legislation
- provide advice on matters related to the agency's work
- provide information to assist political entities and the public in understanding and complying with the law
- maintain Elections Canada's relationship with the Commissioner of Canada Elections and the Broadcasting Arbitrator

Conducting research and analysis

The functions of the Chief Electoral Officer require constant connection with the broader environment, including Parliament, the academic community, the media and the international scene, to:

- refine knowledge of electoral matters to support the Chief Electoral Officer in developing his recommendations for amendments to the *Canada Elections Act*, and advising parliamentarians on electoral matters
- conduct regular information gathering and analysis to support strategic planning, monitor progress in delivering electoral events and to complete corporate projects
- establish links and partnerships with scholars, research institutes, provincial and national bodies involved in electoral matters and relevant international organizations, with a view to constant improvements in election delivery
- disseminate information to various clients by various means, including the agency's Web site, electronic mailing lists and *Electoral Insight* magazine

Implementing outreach and communication programs

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

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

- encourages returning officers to appoint, where warranted, community relations officers to help identify and address the needs of individual communities with significant Aboriginal, youth, ethnocultural or homeless populations, and encourage their participation in the electoral process
- consults and maintains contact with Aboriginal, youth, ethnocultural and special needs groups to make sure that we provide the information and services they need
- maintains a Web site, with a live feed of voting results on election night and special sections dedicated to youth, Aboriginal electors, ethnocultural communities and the various political entities
- answers questions from the public during and between elections by toll-free telephone (1-800-463-6868), through the Web site (www.elections.ca) and by mail
- produces and distributes publications in print, electronic and video formats: news releases and advisories, legislative reports, information documents and educational kits

Elections Canada on the Web

The most up-to-date information on the Canadian electoral system is accessible worldwide on the Elections Canada Web site at www.elections.ca.

The site displays a wealth of information on all aspects of the federal electoral process, including:

- an interactive module with information on how, when and where to register and vote, based on the elector's postal code
- profiles of individual federal ridings, with maps, contact information for the returning officer and a list of all candidates during elections
- the voter registration forms, along with instructions, for Canadian electors located inside or outside Canada who cannot or do not wish to vote at a polling station during an election
- sections for political entities that inform them about their rights and obligations and provide guidance, handbooks and reporting tools
- live broadcast of election results on election night
- a searchable section of financial returns from all political entities
- media information, publications and teaching materials

Overseeing political financing

Since the reform brought by Bill C-24 in January 2004, which changed political financing rules and extended regulation to electoral district associations, nomination contestants and leadership candidates, the agency's responsibilities in the area of political financing are to:

- review for compliance with the *Canada Elections Act* and publish:
 - annual financial returns and statements of assets and liabilities of registered political parties and their registered electoral district associations
 - quarterly financial returns from registered parties that receive quarterly allowances
 - registered party returns on general election expenses
 - leadership contestant registration; weekly and campaign returns

- nomination campaign returns for contestants who receive or spend \$1,000 or more
- candidate electoral campaign returns for general or by-elections
- third party election advertising returns
- review the financial returns of registered referendum committees after a referendum
- administer the partial reimbursement of election expenses to eligible candidates (after a by-election or general election) and to parties (after a general election)
- administer quarterly allowance payments to registered political parties
- administer audit subsidies payable to auditors for candidates and registered associations

In addition to its political financing responsibilities, the agency pays election workers and suppliers and manages its own internal finances. Frequent legislative changes demand responsive fiscal planning to take new tasks into account and streamline financial policies and systems. Accountability stems from internal audit operations, performance measurement and corporate reporting, including reports on plans and priorities and performance reports that are presented to Parliament.

Efficiency through information technology

Computers and networking are now integral to the agency's management and election delivery, and Elections Canada has developed a number of customized applications for its needs. Among other IT uses, Elections Canada:

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

Upholding international co-operation

The Canadian electoral system is now recognized internationally as a model for countries that are trying to implement and consolidate their own democratic institutions.

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

This support is usually provided through multilateral programs and takes many forms: pre-election assessment, technical advice, training and civic education, election monitoring and provision of election materials. Elections Canada's missions range from sending a single expert to address one aspect of the electoral process, to assembling multi-year, multi-country teams to undertake in-depth and ongoing analysis and assistance, including observation and peer support covering all areas of the electoral process.

The agency also welcomes visitors, including election administrators, parliamentarians and other civil society members from around the world and briefs them about Canada's electoral system and how it is managed. In addition to sharing experience with evolving democracies, Elections Canada participates in the development of international standards and knowledge related to every aspect of democratic elections.

The principle of *peer support* guides the international work of Elections Canada. It provides such support to electoral management bodies before, during and after elections, and helps them develop and strengthen the institutional frameworks, skills and autonomy that are crucial building blocks of electoral democratic development.

This approach grew from the partnership between Elections Canada and its colleagues at the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE) in Mexico since 1993. More recently, it is exemplified in two multilateral election monitoring missions, the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) and the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE), both chaired by the Chief Electoral Officer. The IMIE worked closely with the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) through three electoral events in 2005 – the January 30 elections for the Transitional National Assembly, the October 15 constitutional referendum and the December 15 Council of Representatives elections.

In Haiti, the IMMHE worked with the Conseil électoral provisoire through the first and second rounds of the Haitian presidential and legislative elections on February 7 and April 21, 2006, respectively. This mission was succeeded by the Canadian Mission for Accompanying Haitian Elections (CMAHE), also chaired by the Chief Electoral Officer. The CMAHE provided monitoring and advice for the Haitian December 3, 2006, local, municipal and follow-up legislative elections.

Elections Canada's missions seek to identify the choices available to each host country in light of its specific challenges and opportunities, and help implement options that best meet a country's democratic development needs while respecting the culture and history from which it emanates.

The federal electoral process

How are Canadian elections prepared and conducted?

Even if candidates and political parties get the most visibility during elections, they are not the only actors involved. Behind the scenes, thousands of election workers play an essential role in making sure that each electoral event is fair and well managed. On election day, more than 190,000 temporary employees work at some 60,800 polling stations in the nearly 15,000 polling places across the country. A returning officer in each of the 308 electoral districts coordinates the activities of these workers. Around 30 field liaison officers provide assistance to returning officers in their duties in coordination with Elections Canada and liaise with the media in the field. Based on local needs, community relations officers are hired to reach out to target groups, namely youth and students, Aboriginal groups, ethnocultural communities and homeless people.

Preparing for a general election

Because the length of time between elections is not a set period, Elections Canada must always be ready to deliver a general election. The agency updates the National Register of Electors year-round, trains new returning officers and prepares tonnes of supplies. In the field, returning officers complete pre-event assignments such as setting up polling divisions and selecting potential locations for polling stations, among many other tasks.

The National Register of Electors

Elections Canada uses the National Register of Electors to produce the preliminary lists of electors and voter information cards for a general election, by-election or referendum. Once they have signed an agreement with Elections Canada, provincial, territorial and municipal electoral organizations and school boards may also use information from the Register to produce their voters lists.

About 17 percent of voter information changes every year, so the Register is continually updated, with the individual's consent, with data from the Canada Revenue agency, Canada Post, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Other sources include provincial and territorial registrars of motor vehicles and vital statistics, electoral agencies in British Columbia and Quebec, and final voters lists from provincial and territorial elections.

Returning officers

The key election officer in each of the 308 electoral districts is the returning officer. Appointed on merit by the Chief Electoral Officer through an open and competitive process, federal returning officers work under the general supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer. They receive support from the 30 field liaison officers who provide functional leadership under the direction of the Chief Electoral Officer.

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

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

Setting up polling divisions

To facilitate the vote, every electoral district must be divided into polling divisions, each serving an average of some 400 electors,² and a voters list must be drawn up for each of these divisions. Polling divisions are also used to direct electors to their specific voting location. There are some 65,000 polling divisions across the country.

Selecting locations for polling stations

Returning officers select convenient and accessible locations for polling stations, for both election day and advance voting. Polling stations are usually set up in well-known central locations with level access, such as community centres and schools.

Preparing supplies

Staff at Elections Canada in Ottawa develop administrative procedures and prepare maps, instruction kits, forms, information materials, ballot paper and boxes, and other supplies that will be needed to conduct an election. Early shipments are sent to returning officers' homes and staging posts across the country if an election is thought to be imminent.

² According to the *Canada Elections Act* (s. 538), a polling division must contain at least 250 electors.

Launching an election

For a general election, the Governor General (at the request of the Prime Minister) dissolves Parliament, and the Governor in Council (the Governor General acting on the advice of Cabinet) sets the date of the election and the date by which returning officers must return the writs. A writ is a formal document directing a returning officer to conduct an election in his or her electoral district, and on which the returning officer writes the name of the winning candidate after election day. By law, the time between the issue of the writs and election day must be at least 36 days. In practice, general elections usually last 36 days. An exception was the 39th general election, which included the 2005 Christmas and New Year holiday period and lasted 55 days.

Issuing the writs

Once advised of the election, the Chief Electoral Officer sends a notice to each returning officer, directing him or her to rent office space, open a returning office and provide the services that enable electors to exercise their right to vote. At the same time, the writs of election are being printed, giving the dates for election day and for the close of nominations. After signing the writs, the Chief Electoral Officer sends one to each returning officer, who then publishes a notice of election informing voters of the important dates and other details.

Opening the local returning offices

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

General election countdown

The election call

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

Election day

- Electors vote at ordinary and mobile polling stations.
- Preliminary voting results are available after the polls close across the country.

Wrap-up

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

Revising the preliminary lists

Immediately after the election is called, Elections Canada prepares the preliminary lists of electors for each riding, using information from the National Register of Electors, and sends the lists to the returning officers. The returning officers mail a voter information card to every registered elector soon afterwards. Each card confirms the name and address of the elector, provides information about when and where to vote and how to contact the returning officer, and indicates whether the polling station has level access.

Since 2004, Elections Canada also sends a reminder card to every household in Canada. The card asks voters to contact Elections Canada if they have not received a voter information card, and lists the dates for voting in advance, on election day and by special ballot, as well as Elections Canada's telephone and teletypewriter, or "TTY," numbers and Web site address.

Between the beginning of the election period and the sixth day before election day, the lists of electors are revised as needed by adding, deleting and correcting the information they contain. If an elector has moved within the same electoral district, he or she can have the information changed over the telephone. Voters can also register in person at the advance polls and on election day, with proof of identity and residence. The returning officer prepares revised lists of electors to be used at the advance polls, and a second set of revised lists, called the official lists, to be used on election day.

Returning officers also carry out a targeted revision of selected areas of their electoral district. During the revision period, returning officers send pairs of revising agents to visit electors door to door in areas where electors are less likely to appear on the preliminary voters list at their current addresses. These areas include, but are not limited to, new residential developments, college and university residences, high-mobility neighbourhoods (including off-campus student housing) and long-term-care facilities. This targeted revision aims to increase elector registration levels and improve awareness of the federal revision process.

Nominating candidates

After the returning officer publishes the notice of election and before the close of nominations at 2:00 p.m. on the 21st day before election day, the witness for each prospective candidate submits the nomination papers, including the name, address and signature of at least 100 electors (or 50 electors in large and sparsely populated ridings) who support the nomination, along with a \$1,000 deposit, to the returning officer. The returning officer then has 48 hours to verify that the documentation is complete and complies with the *Canada Elections Act* before confirming or refusing to accept the candidacy. Following a refusal, corrected papers may be resubmitted until the close of nominations.

Registering political parties

A political party must be properly registered with the Chief Electoral Officer if it wants to issue tax receipts for contributions, be eligible to receive quarterly allowances and partial reimbursements of its election expenses and have the party's name appear on the ballots under its candidates' names. An eligible party becomes registered when it endorses at least one candidate in a general election or by-election, so long as its application for registration was made with the Chief Electoral Officer at least 60 days before the writs were issued.

Requirements for political party registration

Among other information and documentation, a political party must include in its application for registration the following:

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

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

Voting

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

Ordinary polls

This is the method of voting used by the vast majority of voters. During the hours of voting on election day, electors go to the polling station indicated on their voter information cards, have their names crossed off the list and go behind a voting screen to mark a ballot.

Distribution of votes, by voting method (1997–2006)

Over the last decade, electors have increasingly used advance voting and the convenient special ballot. Some 86 percent of electors cast their ballots on election day at the 39th general election, compared to 93 percent at the 36th general election.

	June 2, 1997 %	November 27, 2000 %	June 28, 2004 %	January 23, 2006 %
Election day	93.1	91.9	88.3	85.7
Mobile polling stations	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.8
Special ballots	1.0	1.5	1.8	3.0
Advance polls	5.4	6.0	9.2	10.5
Number of valid votes	12,985,874	12,857,773	13,564,702	14,817,159

An elector who is not registered on the preliminary list of electors can register during the revision period until the 6th day before election day. It is also possible to register on election day at the polling station, by:

- presenting satisfactory proof of identity and residence, or
- making a sworn statement of identity and residence in the presence of another elector already registered in the same polling division. This procedure is known as “vouching”; an elector may vouch for only one other elector

Voting hours on election day

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

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

Staggered voting hours

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

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

Marking the ballot

At the polling station specified on the voter information card, the poll clerk crosses the voter’s name off the voters list. The deputy returning officer hands the voter a folded ballot with the initials of the deputy returning officer on the outside.

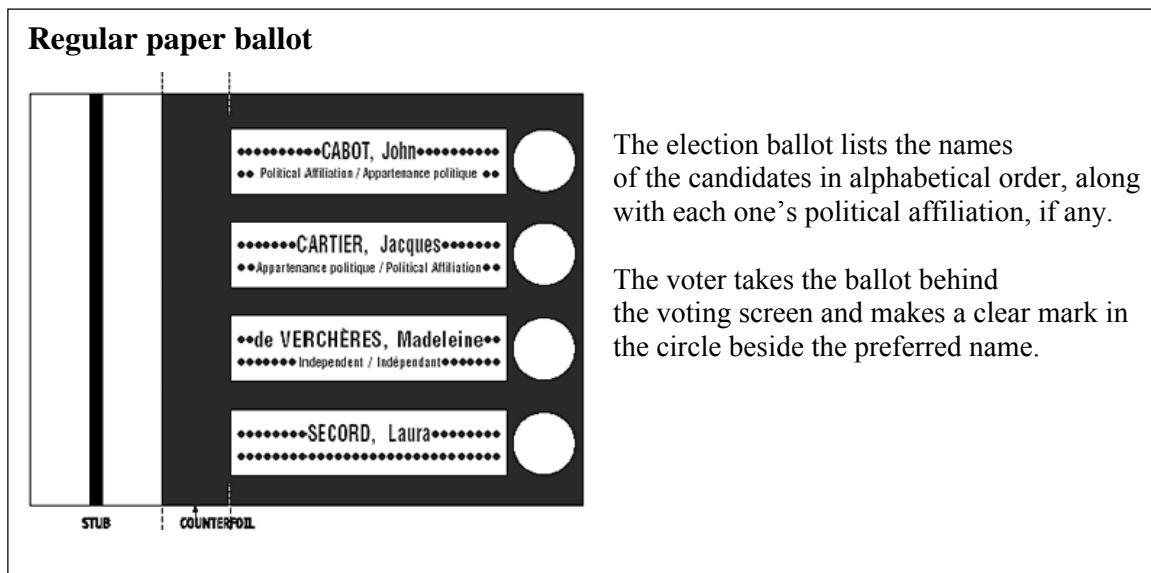
The voter then re-folds the ballot so that the deputy returning officer's initials are visible and hands it to the deputy returning officer. The deputy returning officer checks the initials and the number shown on the counterfoil, removes the counterfoil and discards it, and returns the ballot to the voter. The voter, or the deputy returning officer at the voter's request, places the folded ballot in the ballot box. The poll clerk then places a mark in the "Voted" column beside the elector's name on the voters list.

Advance voting

Three days – Friday, Saturday and Monday, the 10th, 9th and 7th days before polling day – are designated for advance voting to accommodate electors who know that they will be unable, or do not wish, to vote on election day. Advance polls are open between the hours of noon and 8:00 p.m.

The dates and the location of the designated advance polling station for each elector are indicated on the voter information card. The voting procedure is almost the same as at the ordinary polls.

An elector whose name is not on the revised voters list can register in person at the advance polling station where he or she is entitled to vote by showing satisfactory proof of identity and residence.



Special ballot

The *Canada Elections Act* provides alternative procedures for voting specifically designed for, but not limited to, electors who:

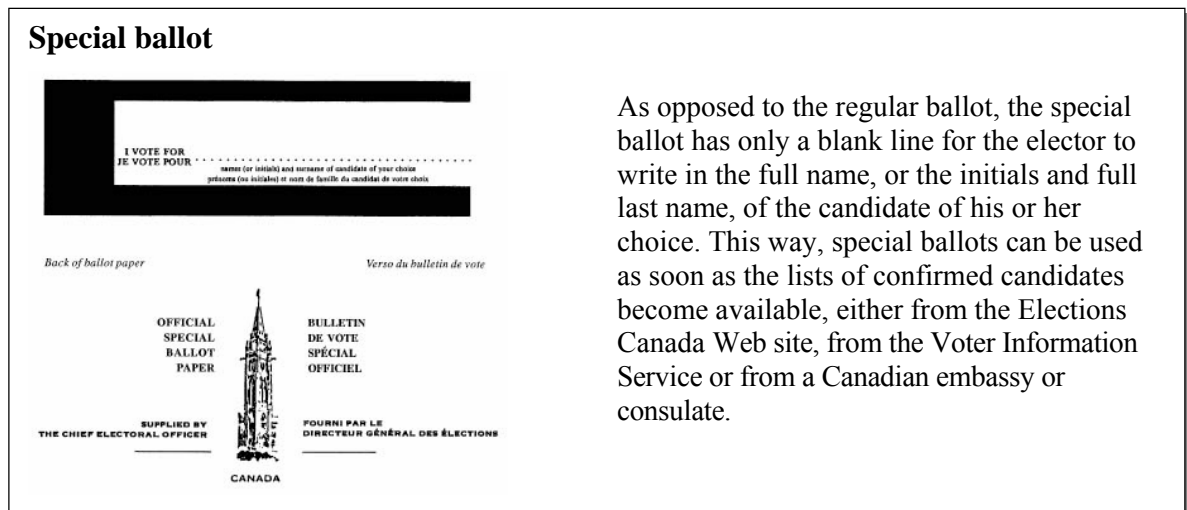
- reside temporarily outside Canada (less than five consecutive years, with certain exceptions) at the time of an election
- reside in Canada, but might be away from their electoral districts when it is time to vote

- are members of the Canadian Forces
- are incarcerated

Any elector can register to vote by special ballot, at the latest on the sixth day before election day. Application forms are available from returning officers, on the Elections Canada Web site or directly from Elections Canada in Ottawa. Once the registration is accepted, a kit containing a ballot and three envelopes is mailed to the elector. Once registered to vote by special ballot, an elector cannot vote in any other way.

Electors can vote only for a candidate who is running in their own electoral district no matter where they cast and mail their special ballots.

To preserve secrecy, the elector seals the special ballot in the unmarked envelope, puts that sealed envelope in the envelope with the electoral district's name on it, seals this second envelope and puts it in the mailing envelope.



As opposed to the regular ballot, the special ballot has only a blank line for the elector to write in the full name, or the initials and full last name, of the candidate of his or her choice. This way, special ballots can be used as soon as the lists of confirmed candidates become available, either from the Elections Canada Web site, from the Voter Information Service or from a Canadian embassy or consulate.

Special ballots can be returned either by mail or by courier. To be counted as valid, special ballots sent from outside an elector's home electoral district must arrive at Elections Canada before 6:00 p.m., Ottawa time, on election day. Those sent from within an electoral district must reach the office of the returning officer in that district before the close of polling stations on election day.

Electors who are in the Canadian Forces or incarcerated also vote by special ballot, using slightly different procedures: the former vote at military bases and the latter in correctional institutions.

Accessibility

The right to vote in Canada is universally guaranteed by the Constitution since the adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. This has a profound impact on how Elections Canada must approach the delivery of elections; in effect, the agency must ensure that voting is accessible to all citizens over 18. To make the process most accessible to all, the *Canada Elections Act* provides for a variety of flexible voting methods and entrusts Elections Canada with addressing any obstacles to voting.

All returning offices, all polling stations and all other premises used during an election must have level access. Under exceptional local circumstances, the returning officer may seek specific authorization from the Chief Electoral Officer to use a polling station that lacks level access. Accessibility is indicated on the voter information card, which is sent to every registered elector shortly after the issue of the writs. If the polling station of a voter with a disability is among the very few that cannot offer level access, the voter can request a transfer certificate to vote at another station with level access. During the 39th general election, only 43 (0.2 percent) of the 14,917 ordinary and 2,767 advance polling sites used did not provide level access.

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

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

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

The results

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

Validation of the results

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

Judicial recounts

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

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

Election reports

The return of the writs

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

The Chief Electoral Officer's reports

After each general election, the Chief Electoral Officer must submit three public reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The first covers the official voting results by polling division and is published without delay. The second, published within 90 days of the return of the writs, is a report on the election and any activities of Elections Canada since the date of the previous narrative report that the Chief Electoral Officer considers should be brought to the attention of the House of Commons. As soon as possible after a general election, the Chief Electoral Officer also reports on any changes to the electoral legislation that he judges desirable for the better administration of the Act. Elections Canada publishes each of these reports in print form and makes them available on-line at www.elections.ca.

By-elections

When a seat in Parliament becomes officially vacant, the Speaker of the House of Commons must inform the Chief Electoral Officer immediately with a Speaker's warrant. Between the 11th and the 180th day after the Chief Electoral Officer receives this warrant, the Governor in Council must set the date for holding a by-election. Once the date is known, the Chief Electoral Officer issues a writ to the returning officer of the electoral district concerned, directing him or her to hold a by-election on that date. If a general election is called after the by-election writ has been issued and before the by-election is held, the writ for the by-election is considered withdrawn, and the Chief Electoral Officer publishes a notice in the *Canada Gazette* to that effect.

Conduct of by-elections

By-elections are conducted in almost the same way as general elections, except that the event is held only in specified electoral districts. There are some other differences, for example:

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

Referendums

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

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

Calling a referendum

Before the referendum period officially begins, the government submits the text of the question³ to the Leader of the Opposition and to each political party represented by at least 12 members in the House of Commons. After this consultation, which may take a maximum of three days, a notice of a motion for approval of the referendum question is submitted to the House of Commons, which also has a maximum of three days to study the text of the question and vote on it. The House of Commons thereafter informs the Senate of the adoption of the motion; the Senate, in turn, has three days to vote on it.

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

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

The Chief Electoral Officer must also make the text of the question(s) available in selected Aboriginal languages. For the 1992 referendum, the question was translated into 37 of the 53 Aboriginal languages used in Canada.

Referendum committees and advertising

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

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

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

³ More than one question can be asked in the same referendum.

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

Referendum ballot



The referendum ballot shows the referendum question, and the words “Yes” and “No,” in English and in French.

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

Voting in a referendum

Electors at the ordinary and advance polls vote by making a clear mark in the circle beside the word “Yes” or “No” on the ballot. The special ballot used for referendums is the same as the one used at the ordinary and advance polls. The word “Yes” or “No” must be written in place of a candidate’s name.

Political financing

How is money regulated throughout federal elections?

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

Disclosure requirements have existed for candidates since the beginning of the 20th century, but the current regime was essentially laid out with the introduction of political party registration in 1970 and the *Election Expenses Act* in 1974. The latter introduced limits on election expenses for both candidates and political parties, and the first forms of public funding through partial reimbursement of expenses and tax credits for contributions. It was not until 2004 that regulation was extended to electoral district associations, and that nomination and leadership contestants became obliged to register and disclose their financial transactions.

Limits on contributions were introduced in 2004. Further restrictions were imposed as of January 1, 2007, and corporations and trade unions are no longer allowed to make political contributions.

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

Contribution limits

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

- a citizen or permanent resident of Canada can give up to \$1,100 in total each year to a particular registered political party, up to \$1,100 each year to the registered electoral district associations, nomination contestants and candidates of a particular registered party, up to \$1,100 in total each year to the leadership contestants of a registered party and up to \$1,100 for a particular election to a candidate in the election who is not endorsed by a registered party
- corporations and trade unions may not make any contributions to political entities

Contribution limits*

Political entities	Citizens and permanent residents only
Political parties	A maximum of \$1,100 per calendar year to each of the registered political parties
Electoral district associations	An aggregated maximum of \$1,100 per year to the registered electoral district associations, nomination candidates and candidates of each of the registered political parties
Nomination contestants	
Party-endorsed candidates	
Independent candidates	A maximum of \$1,100 per election to each independent candidate
Leadership contestants	An aggregated maximum of \$1,100 to all of the contestants in a leadership contest

* Adjusted annually for inflation. The numbers cited here are those that apply on January 1, 2007.

Tax credits for political contributions

Although contributions may be in the form of money, goods or services, only a contribution of money to a registered political party, a provincial division of a registered party, a registered electoral district association or a candidate qualifies for an income tax credit under the *Income Tax Act*. Given the current contribution limit of \$1,100, the maximum tax credit is \$591.67. As contribution limits increase with inflation, the maximum credit allowed under the *Income Tax Act* will be \$650.

Tax credits

Contribution	Tax credit
\$0.01 to \$400.00	75 percent
\$400.01 to \$750.00	\$300 plus 50 percent for contributions over \$400
\$750.01 to \$1,275.00	\$475 plus 33⅓ percent for contributions over \$750
\$1,275.01 and over	A maximum of \$650

Expenses limits

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

Expenses limits at the 39th general election

During the 39th general election, the election expenses limits for political parties ranged from \$68,155 for those that endorsed only one candidate to \$18,278,279 for each of those that endorsed candidates in all 308 ridings – namely, the Conservative Party of Canada, the Green Party of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada and the New Democratic Party.

The final limits for candidates varied from \$62,210 in the electoral district of Malpeque, Prince Edward Island, to \$106,290 in Peace River, Alberta.

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

Reporting

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

- **registered political parties:** an audited statement of assets and liabilities within six months of registration, an audited annual fiscal return, quarterly reports for parties receiving allowances and an audited report on election expenses within six months after election day
- **registered electoral district associations:** a statement of assets and liabilities within six months of registration; and an annual fiscal return (with an auditor's report if the association received contributions or incurred expenses of \$5,000 or more in the fiscal period)
- **candidates:** an audited report on the candidate's campaign expenses, contributions, loans and transfers within four months after election day
- **nomination contestants:** a financial return within four months after the nomination date if the contestant received contributions or incurred expenses of \$1,000 or more (with an

auditor's report if the contestant received contributions or incurred expenses of \$10,000 or more)

- **leadership contestants:** a report on contributions received before the application for registration as a contestant, which must be provided on registration; an interim report on contributions from the first day of the leadership contest to the fourth week before the selection date and weekly reports for the next three weeks; and a final report on all contributions and expenses (with an auditor's report if the leadership candidate received contributions or incurred campaign expenses of \$5,000 or more) six months after the end of the contest
- **third parties:** a report on election advertising expenses (with an auditor's report if the third party incurred advertising expenses of \$5,000 or more) within four months after election day

The names and addresses of those whose contributions exceeded \$200 must also be reported to the Chief Electoral Officer. All financial reports are published at www.elections.ca.

Reporting schedule			
Entity	Return	Deadline	Requirement
Political parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening balance sheet • Quarterly return • Financial transactions return • General election expenses return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six months after registration • 30 days after the end of the quarter • June 30 each year • Six months after the election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory • Mandatory (if eligible for quarterly allowances) • Mandatory • Mandatory
Electoral district associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening balance sheet • Financial transactions return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six months after registration • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory • Mandatory
Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral campaign return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four months after the election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory
Nomination contestants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination campaign return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four months after nomination date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only when \$1,000 or more received in contributions or spent on nomination
Leadership contestants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration report • Weekly leadership campaign return • Leadership campaign return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On registration • Last four weeks of the campaign period • Six months after the end of the contest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory • Mandatory • Mandatory

Reimbursements for candidates

A candidate who is elected or receives at least 10 percent of the valid votes cast in his or her electoral district, submits the proper reports by the statutory deadline and has an unqualified auditor's report is entitled to a reimbursement of 60 percent of election and personal expenses paid, to a maximum of 60 percent of the election expenses limit established for the riding. This reimbursement is publicly funded. Once a candidate has filed the necessary reports by the statutory deadline and has accounted for all income tax receipts, the nomination deposit of \$1,000 is also returned.

All candidates receive an audit subsidy paid directly to the auditor, equal to 3 percent of election expenses incurred from a minimum of \$250 to a maximum of \$1,500.

Reimbursements and allowances for political parties

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

Registered parties also become entitled to receive publicly funded quarterly allowances once they have filed the proper reports and obtain the minimum threshold of valid votes described above. The quarterly allowance is equivalent to \$0.4375 per valid vote obtained by the party in the most recent general election, and is adjusted annually for inflation.

Audit subsidy for registered electoral district associations

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

Regulation of third parties

The *Canada Elections Act* regulates third parties that engage in election advertising, defined as an advertising message that promotes or opposes a registered party or the election of a candidate, including one that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated.

A third party may be a person or a group, defined as an unincorporated trade union, trade association or other group of persons acting together by mutual consent for a common purpose. Candidates, registered political parties and registered electoral district associations are not third parties.

Third parties that spend less than \$500 on their election advertising are not required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. Still, any election advertising must identify the sponsoring third party and state that it was authorized by the third party. A third party must register with the Chief Electoral Officer as soon as it spends \$500 or more on election advertising.

For the 39th general election in 2006, 80 third parties registered. Each one could spend up to \$172,050, as indexed, on election advertising nationwide. Of this, a third party could not spend more than \$3,441, as indexed, in a single electoral district.

A registered third party must report its election advertising expenses no later than four months after election day. Third parties that spent \$5,000 or more in election advertising must include an auditor's report on the return. Among other information, the return must include the name and address of any contributor who gave a total of more than \$200 in the period starting six months before the election was called and ending on election day. Third parties cannot issue tax receipts for monetary contributions.

Further information

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

This publication is available in alternative formats.

For a complete list of Elections Canada documents, see the Publications section of our Web site or contact us by mail, telephone or fax.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Evolution of the federal electoral system

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

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

1867 At the first general election after Confederation in 1867, only a small minority of the population, largely composed of male British subjects with real property of a certain value, can vote in a country that has just four provinces, represented by 181 members of Parliament.

1874 The *Dominion Elections Act* brings in the use of the secret ballot and the practice of holding a general election on the same day in all electoral districts.

Candidates are required to report their election expenses, but no enforcement mechanisms are provided.

1885 Parliament draws up a complicated federal franchise, based on property ownership. The rules differ from town to town and from province to province.

1898 The government returns control of the right to vote in federal elections to the provinces.

1908 Direct contributions from corporations to candidates are prohibited, but since the law does not recognize political parties, and without any requirements to disclose the source of political contributions, this principle remains unenforceable.

1915 The First World War brings important changes to the federal franchise. In 1915, the right to vote is granted to military personnel on active service.

1917 Parliament once more takes over responsibility for preparing the voters lists, through the *War-time Elections Act* and the *Military Voters Act*. The right to vote is extended to all British subjects, women and men, who are active or retired members of the armed forces, including First Nations people and persons under 21 years of age.

1918 The franchise at federal elections is extended to women 21 years of age or over.

1919 Women become eligible for election to the House of Commons.

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

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

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

1929 A legislative amendment establishes Monday as federal election day.

1930 The government of R. B. Bennett introduces a permanent list of electors in an effort to replace enumeration, but abandons the approach after one election as impractical and expensive.

The restrictions on contributions from corporations are abandoned.

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

1950 Inuit people obtain the right to vote.

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

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

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

1970 The voting age and the age of candidacy are lowered from 21 to 18 years.

Civil servants posted abroad and their dependants, as well as dependants of military personnel, become entitled to use the voting method previously reserved for the military.

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

1974 The *Election Expenses Act* introduces a comprehensive set of controls over election expenses and financing. The legislation sets spending limits for candidates, and requires public disclosure of all contributions exceeding \$100 to political parties and candidates. Public funding measures are introduced through partial reimbursement of election expenses, tax credits for political contributions and the allocation of free broadcasting time among political parties. To enforce these provisions, the Act also creates the position of Commissioner of Election Expenses. Third party advertising is prohibited.

1977 A legislative amendment broadens the mandate of the Commissioner of Election Expenses, who becomes the Commissioner of Canada Elections, responsible for the enforcement of all provisions of the *Canada Elections Act*.

1982 The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* defines constitutional rights and freedoms, including the freedom of opinion and expression, the universal right to vote and to be a candidate in a legislative election, and the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. These rights and freedoms are subject only to reasonable limits, prescribed by law, that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

1983 The ban on third party advertising is lifted, but restrictions apply on allowable expenses. Every person, other than a candidate or an official agent, who incurs election expenses becomes guilty of an offence under the *Canada Elections Act*.

1992 The *Referendum Act* is passed to provide a legal and administrative framework for conducting federal referendums on any question related to the Constitution of Canada.

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

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

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

Other changes authorize registration at urban polls on election day (previously allowed only for rural voters), shorten the minimum election period from 50 to 47 days and ban the publication and broadcasting of opinion polls during the last three days of a campaign.

A cap of \$1,000 is imposed on a third party's election advertising.

1996 Amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* introduce a permanent register of electors and eliminate door-to-door enumeration for federal elections, referendums and by-elections.

The general election and by-election period is shortened from a minimum of 45 days to 36 days.

Voting hours on polling day are staggered and extended so that most of the results are available at approximately the same time across the country.

2000 A new *Canada Elections Act* modernizes the organization and terminology of the electoral legislation, and introduces new controls on election advertising by third parties (persons or groups who are not candidates for office, registered political parties or their electoral district associations).

The new Act prohibits election advertising and the publication of new election opinion poll results on election day.

It also authorizes the Commissioner of Canada Elections to enter into compliance agreements and, where necessary, to obtain court injunctions.

The Act also mandates the Chief Electoral Officer to develop and test electronic voting procedures.

Third parties are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer and disclose their election advertising expenses.

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

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

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

2006 Legislative amendments introduced as part of the *Federal Accountability Act* further restrict political donations and make other changes to the *Canada Elections Act* intended to increase the transparency of the electoral process and better control the influence of money on elections. The Act amends the rules for political contributions, gifts and the use of trust funds, the appointment of returning officers and the prosecution process.

Contributions

- Only citizens and permanent residents of Canada may make donations to registered political entities.
- Donations are capped at \$1,100 (indexed for inflation) per calendar year to each registered political party, the various entities of each registered party (registered associations, nomination contestants and candidates), each independent candidate for a particular election and the contestants in a particular leadership contest.
- Cash contributions to registered political entities are limited to \$20.
- Corporations, trade unions, associations and groups may no longer make political contributions.
- The new restrictions and prohibitions came into force on January 1, 2007.

Political gifts and trust funds

- Candidates cannot accept any gift (other than contributions to their campaigns) that might be seen to influence them as eventual members of Parliament, although they may accept a gift from a relative or as a normal expression of courtesy or protocol.
- Candidates must report to the Chief Electoral Officer the name and address of every person (other than a relative) or organization from whom they receive a gift or gifts worth more than \$500 while a candidate, the nature of the gift and the circumstances under which it was given.
- Registered parties and registered electoral district associations may no longer transfer trust funds to candidates of the party.
- These provisions will come into force on June 12, 2007.

Returning officers

- The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for appointing a returning officer for each electoral district. Appointments are made on the basis of merit, when the Chief Electoral Officer is satisfied that the person meets the essential qualifications to perform the work. Returning officers are appointed for a term of 10 years, but may be removed for reasons set out in the Act.
- The new appointment process for returning officers came into force on February 10, 2007.

Prosecution

- A prosecution for an offence under the *Canada Elections Act* must start within 5 years after the day when the Commissioner became aware of the facts giving rise to the prosecution, and no later than 10 years after the day the offence was committed.
- The Director of Public Prosecutions is responsible for initiating and conducting prosecutions for offences under the *Canada Elections Act*. The Commissioner of Canada Elections remains responsible for compliance agreements and enforcing the Act through the use of injunctions to prevent or stop violations of the law during an election period.
- These provisions came into force in December 2006.

Appendix 2: Distribution of House of Commons seats, 1867–2006

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

Appendix 3: Canadian parliaments, 1867–2006

Parliament	Date the writs were issued	Election date	Dissolution date	Duration (Years)	Political party in power	Seats (Won/Total)
1st	August 6, 1867	Aug. 7 – Sep. 20, 1867	July 8, 1872	4.9	Liberal-Conservative	101/181
2nd	July 15, 1872	Jul. 20 – Oct. 12, 1872	January 2, 1874	1.5	Liberal-Conservative	103/200
3rd	January 2, 1874	January 22, 1874	August 17, 1878	4.6	Liberal	133/206
4th	August 17, 1878	September 17, 1878	May 18, 1882	3.7	Liberal-Conservative	137/206
5th	May 18, 1882	June 20, 1882	January 15, 1887	4.6	Liberal-Conservative	139/210
6th	January 17, 1887	February 22, 1887	February 3, 1891	4.0	Liberal-Conservative	123/215
7th	February 4, 1891	March 5, 1891	April 24, 1896	5.1	Liberal-Conservative	123/215
8th	April 24, 1896	June 6, 1896	October 9, 1900	3.5	Liberal	118/213
9th	October 9, 1900	November 7, 1900	September 29, 1904	3.9	Liberal	132/213
10th	September 29, 1904	November 3, 1904	September 17, 1908	3.9	Liberal	139/214
11th	September 18, 1908	October 26, 1908	July 29, 1911	2.8	Liberal	133/221
12th	August 3, 1911	September 21, 1911	October 6, 1917	6.0	Conservative	133/221
13th	October 31, 1917	December 17, 1917	October 4, 1921	3.8	Unionist	153/235
14th	October 8, 1921	December 6, 1921	September 5, 1925	3.6	Liberal	118/235*
15th	September 5, 1925	October 29, 1925	July 2, 1926	0.6	Liberal	115/245*
16th	July 20, 1926	September 14, 1926	May 30, 1930	3.7	Liberal	125/245
17th	May 30, 1930	July 28, 1930	August 14, 1935	5.1	Conservative	137/245
18th	August 15, 1935	October 14, 1935	January 25, 1940	4.3	Liberal	173/245
19th	January 27, 1940	March 26, 1940	April 16, 1945	5.1	Liberal	181/245
20th	April 16, 1945	June 11, 1945	April 30, 1949	3.9	Liberal	125/245
21st	April 30, 1949	June 27, 1949	June 13, 1953	4.0	Liberal	190/262
22nd	June 13, 1953	August 10, 1953	April 12, 1957	3.7	Liberal	171/265
23rd	April 12, 1957	June 10, 1957	February 1, 1958	0.5	Progressive Conservative	111/265*
24th	February 1, 1958	March 31, 1958	April 19, 1962	4.1	Progressive Conservative	208/265
25th	April 19, 1962	June 18, 1962	February 6, 1963	0.6	Progressive Conservative	116/265*
26th	February 6, 1963	April 8, 1963	September 8, 1965	2.3	Liberal	128/265*
27th	September 8, 1965	November 8, 1965	April 23, 1968	2.4	Liberal	131/265*
28th	April 25, 1968	June 25, 1968	September 1, 1972	4.2	Liberal	155/264
29th	September 1, 1972	October 30, 1972	May 9, 1974	1.5	Liberal	109/265*
30th	May 9, 1974	July 8, 1974	March 26, 1979	4.7	Liberal	141/264
31st	March 26, 1979	May 22, 1979	December 14, 1979	0.5	Progressive Conservative	136/282*
32nd	December 14, 1979	February 18, 1980	July 9, 1984	4.4	Liberal	147/282

Parliament	Date the writs were issued	Election date	Dissolution date	Duration (Years)	Political party in power	Seats (Won/Total)
33rd	July 9, 1984	September 4, 1984	October 1, 1988	4.1	Progressive Conservative	211/282
34th	October 1, 1988	November 21, 1988	September 8, 1993	4.8	Progressive Conservative	169/295
35th	September 8, 1993	October 25, 1993	April 27, 1997	3.5	Liberal	177/295
36th	April 27, 1997	June 2, 1997	October 22, 2000	3.4	Liberal	155/301
37th	October 22, 2000	November 27, 2000	May 23, 2004	3.5	Liberal	172/301
38th	May 23, 2004	June 28, 2004	November 29, 2005	1.4	Liberal	135/308*
39th	November 29, 2005	January 23, 2006	–	0.7	Conservative	124/308*
Average				3.4		* Minority government

Appendix 4: Canadian Prime Ministers, 1867–2006

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

Appendix 5: Statistics on voter turnout, 1867–2006

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

Date	Population	Electors on lists	Ballots cast	Voter turnout¹ (%)
1968 (June 25)	20,014,880	10,860,888	8,217,916	75.7
1972 (October 30)	21,568,311	13,000,778	9,974,661	76.7
1974 (July 8)	21,568,311	13,620,353	9,671,002	71.0
1979 (May 22)	22,992,604	15,233,653	11,541,000	75.7
1980 (February 18)	22,992,604	15,890,416	11,015,514	69.3
1984 (September 4)	24,343,181	16,774,941	12,638,424	75.3
1988 (November 21)	25,309,331	17,639,001	13,281,191	75.3
1992 (October 26) ^{3, 4}	20,400,896	13,725,966	9,855,978	71.8
1993 (October 25)	27,296,859	19,906,796	13,863,135	69.7
1997 (June 2)	27,296,859	19,663,478	13,174,698	67.0
2000 (November 27)	28,846,761	21,243,473	12,997,185	64.1
2004 (June 28)	30,007,094	22,466,621	13,683,570	60.9
2006 (January 23)	30,007,094	23,054,615	14,908,703	64.7

1. Generally, percentages are calculated based on the number of registered electors. However, presenting these figures involves several challenges, in part because the data of official election results since Confederation have not been reported consistently, and in part due to variations in the electoral system itself. For instance, in the case of an election by acclamation, the number of registered electors on the lists for that electoral district was not always included in the total number of registered electors. In other cases, lists of electors were not prepared for some districts, and even for Prince Edward Island as a whole, for several elections. Moreover, until 1966, a number of electoral districts were dual-member constituencies. As each elector could vote for more than one candidate, the reported number of votes cast (valid and rejected ballots together) was higher than it would have been in a single-member scenario. In these cases, the total number of votes was divided by the number of members elected.
2. In early elections, polling took place over several weeks or even months.
3. This was a referendum.
4. Does not include Quebec, which conducted its own referendum based on provincial legislation.
5. This percentage rises to 70.9 when the number of electors on the lists is adjusted to account for electors who had moved or died between the enumeration for the 1992 referendum and the election of 1993, for which a separate enumeration was not carried out, except in Quebec, as the 1992 electoral lists were reused.
6. The turnout of 61.2 percent in 2000 was adjusted to arrive at the final turnout of 64.1 percent, after the maintenance of the National Register of Electors to remove the names of deceased electors and duplicates arising from moves.

Sources: Reports of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery (1867–1917); reports of the Chief Electoral Officer (1921–2006); unpublished summary data prepared by Elections Canada; R. Pomfret, *The Economic Development of Canada* (1987); H. A. Scarrow, *Canada Votes* (1962); *Contact* (1985).

