

## CANADA

**Date of Elections:** October 30, 1972

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held to renew all the members of the House of Commons, dissolved by the Governor-General, upon the advice of the Prime Minister, on September 1, 1972. Previous federal general elections took place on June 25, 1968.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The federal Parliament of Canada is bicameral. The House of Commons is constituted on the principle of representation according to population; the Senate according to territorial divisions.

Under the British North America Acts, which are the basis of the Constitution, the representation of each of Canada's provinces in the House of Commons is to be readjusted after each decennial census. A province is always, however, entitled to a number of members not less than the number of its Senators. The present House of Commons is composed of 264 members.

The number of Senators may not exceed 110, and at present stands at 102. All of these are appointed by the Governor-General and represent their provinces at large except Senators from Quebec, who represent divisions of that province. A Senator holding office prior to June 2, 1965, is entitled to hold this post for life; if appointed after this date he must retire at the age of 75.

According to the Constitution, the duration of Parliament is limited to a maximum of 5 years. In practice, however, absent premature dissolution, the House of Commons is generally renewed after 4 years, which is considered as a normal term of office.

### **Electoral System**

All citizens of either sex who have attained the age of 18 years\* are qualified as electors. The franchise extends also to members of the armed forces under the age of 18 and to British subjects, other than Canadian citizens, who qualified as electors on June 25, 1968, and who have continued to reside in Canada since that date. These British subjects are deemed to have the right to vote until June 25, 1975.

Judges appointed by the Governor-General, the Chief Electoral Officer and his assistant, and the returning officer for each electoral district are disqualified

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections IV* (1969-1970), p. 11.

from voting, as are persons guilty of corrupt or illegal election practices, prisoners and the insane.

All qualified electors may be entered on the list of electors for the polling division in which they ordinarily reside. These lists are revised on the district level starting 49 days before election day. Voting is not compulsory.

All qualified electors may be candidates to the House of Commons. Ineligible for varying time periods, however, are those persons convicted of electoral fraud or of a corrupt practice (7 years) or illegal practice (5 years) connected with elections; certain public officers; members of provincial legislatures; and those persons party to certain contracts and agreements with the Government.

All British subjects at least 30 years old who are resident in the province for which appointed, who own land free of incumbrances to the value of \$C4,000 within that same province, and whose real and personal property together have a net worth of \$C4,000 are qualified to become Senators. In Quebec, the real property qualification is considered within the electoral division.

For the House of Commons, a minimum of 25 electors may nominate a candidate for each electoral district. The mandatory deposit of JC200 accompanying the nomination paper is returned where the candidate is elected or obtains at least one-half of the votes polled by the successful candidate.

Voting for the House of Commons is on the basis of simple plurality in single-member constituencies. The ballot lists only the name, address and occupation of the candidate, with no mention of his party affiliation.

For the House of Commons, by-elections are held to fill vacancies arising between general elections. Vacancies in the Senate are filled by the Governor-General.

## General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The elections were contested by 1,115 candidates in a campaign that was relatively calm. Prime Minister Trudeau, head of the ruling Liberal Party, emphasized his Government's past record, especially in overcoming the financial and economic crises of August 1971, and relied on his compromise policy concerning relations between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians, a policy which, the Liberals estimated, was still the closest thing to a national consensus. Opposing political groups, in turn, generally complained of the rising unemployment and inflation, of the Government's favouring of Quebec over the other provinces, and of the disproportionate number of French-speaking officials holding positions at the federal level.

The principal opposition Progressive-Conservative Party, for its part, pointed to Mr. Trudeau's management of the Canadian economy, which pushed unemployment in September 1972 to its highest level (7.1%) since 1961. The New Democratic Party (NDP), led by Mr. David Lewis — himself very critical of the Government's economic policies — advocated reforming the tax system to end favourable treatment for large corporations and financial help for pensioners. The fourth party fielding candidates was the Social Credit Party.

On election day, races in numerous constituencies were extremely close, and final official results in these were delayed by complicated recounts under the supervision of a judge and in the presence of party representatives. Recounts, in fact, were automatic in all constituencies where the margin separating 2 candidates was less than 25 votes.

As a result of the vote, the Liberal Party lost numerous seats to Opposition groups, which all reinforced their positions. Of the 109 seats won by the former, more than half — 56 — were captured in Quebec alone, while marginal gains were made in the Atlantic provinces and losses occurred in Ontario, the prairie provinces and British Columbia. Conservative strength was virtually confined to English-speaking Canada, with but 2 seats from Quebec.

On November 2, in the wake of Prime Minister Trudeau's announcement to form a minority Government, Mr. Lewis, leader of the NDP, promised to support the Liberal Party in Parliament on condition that the latter modify some of its programs.

## Statistics

### 1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Commons*

Number of registered voters. . . . .	12,790,686
Voters. . . . .	9,966,148 (77.9%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	298,388
Valid votes. . . . .	9,667,760

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats in the House of Commons
Liberal Party . . . . .	263	3,718,654	38.46	109
Progressive-Conservative Party	264	3,383,277	35.00	107
New Democratic Party . . . . .	251	1,714,208	17.73	31
Social Credit Party . . . . .	164	737,421	7.63	15
Independents . . . . .	52	56,764	0.59	1
Others . . . . .	121	57,436	0.59	1
				264

\* The 14 seats were held by the *Ralliement des Creditistes*.

\*\* There were 4 vacancies at the time of dissolution.

2. *Distribution of Members of the House of Commons according to Professional Category*

Lawyers. . . . .	63
Teachers. . . . .	37
Businessmen. . . . .	20
Company executives. . . . .	19
Farmers. . . . .	18
Merchants. . . . .	13
Journalists. . . . .	10
Tradesmen. . . . .	9
Insurance agents. . . . .	9
Physicians. . . . .	7
Engineers. . . . .	6
Industrialists. . . . .	5
Civil servants. . . . .	5
Accountants. . . . .	5
Others. . . . .	38
	264

3. *Distribution of Members of the House of Commons according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	259
Women. . . . .	5
	264

4. *Distribution of Members of the House of Commons according to Age Group*

21-30. . . . .	12
31-40. . . . .	56
41-50. . . . .	96
51-60. . . . .	72
61-70. . . . .	26
71-80. . . . .	2
	264