

CANADA

Date of Elections: 18 February 1980

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all members of the House of Commons. They were called in December 1979 when the Government was defeated on a vote of no confidence arising from its budget proposals. Previous general elections had taken place in May 1979.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Canada consists of the House of Commons and the Senate.

Under the British North America Acts, which are the basis of the Constitution, the representation of each of Canada's 10 provinces in the House of Commons is to be readjusted after each decennial census. A province is always, however, entitled to a number of Commons members not less than the number of its Senators. The present House of Commons is composed of 282 members. Of this current total, 95 members come from Ontario, 75 from Quebec, 28 from British Columbia, 21 from Alberta, 14 each from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 11 from Nova Scotia, 10 from New Brunswick, 7 from Newfoundland, 4 from Prince Edward Island, 2 from the Northwest Territories and 1 from the Yukon.

The number of Senators may not exceed 112, and at present stands at 104. All Senators are appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. A total of 24 come from each one of Canada's 4 regions (Ontario, Quebec, the Maritime Provinces—Nova Scotia (10 Senators), New Brunswick (10) and Prince Edward Island (4)—and the Western Provinces—British Columbia (6), Alberta (6), Saskatchewan (6) and Manitoba (6)) while 6 Senators come from Newfoundland, 1 from the Northwest Territories, and 1 from the Yukon. A Senator holding office prior to 2 June 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, the House of Commons is generally renewed after 4 years, which is considered as the normal term of a legislature.

Electoral System

All Canadian citizens who have attained the age of 18 years are entitled to vote. The franchise also extends to members of the armed forces under the age of 18. Disqualified, however, are persons convicted of certain electoral offences, inmates of penal institutions and the insane. Also unable to vote are the Chief and Assistant Chief Electoral Officer,

the returning officer for each district and every judge appointed by the Governor in Council.

All qualified electors are entitled to have their names entered on the register of electors for the polling division in which they ordinarily reside. These registers are prepared and revised on this level starting 49 days before election day. Voting is not compulsory. Advance polls are open on the ninth and seventh day before the ordinary polling day for certain categories of people. The following persons, when they have reason to believe that they will be unable to vote on any of the scheduled polling days, may appoint proxy voters from their own polling division: fishermen, mariners and prospectors, if absent in the course of their employment; the ill or physically handicapped; and full-time students registered at a Canadian educational institution.

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

All citizens at least 30 years old who are resident in the province for which appointed, who own land free of encumbrances to the value of C\$ 4,000 within that same province, and whose real and personal property together have a net worth of C\$ 4,000 are qualified to become Senators. In Quebec, where Senators represent districts of the province rather than the province as a whole, the residence requirement and property qualifications are considered at the district level.

In addition to the constitutional requirements of regional representation, age and property qualification, there are several criteria of selection of Senators; these are especially party patronage, interest or community group representation and distinguished service to the nation.

For the House of Commons, a minimum of 25 electors may nominate a candidate for each electoral district 21 to 28 days before an election. The mandatory deposit of C\$ 200 accompanying the nomination paper is returned when the candidate is elected or obtains at least one-half of the votes polled by the successful candidate; party candidates are reimbursed only if their duly registered political group has nominated at least 50 candidates in the general election.

Members of the House of Commons are elected by simple majority in single-member constituencies.

By-elections are held to fill vacancies in the House of Commons which arise between general elections. Vacancies in the Senate are filled by the Governor-General.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The minority Progressive Conservative Government formed in May 1979 fell on 13 December of the same year, after the adoption, by 139 votes to 133, of a motion of no

confidence in its budgetary policy, tabled by the New Democratic Party. The House of Commons was dissolved and, the following day, Prime Minister Joseph Clark announced that the elections would be held on 18 February 1980.

As at the May 1979 elections, Mr. Edward Broadbent, leader of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Clark, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, and Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, head of the Liberal Party, opposed one another in the campaign, Mr. Trudeau having, on 18 December 1979, reversed his decision to resign as head of the Liberals.

The main campaign issue involved the Conservatives' draft budget which called for an 18 c. per gallon increase in excise tax on gasoline. If returned to power, the Liberals promised to eliminate this surtax. They also promised to reduce the unprecedented interest rates, as well as the rate of inflation.

On polling day, the Progressive Conservatives lost 33 seats as compared to their May 1979 total, while the Liberals made a gain of the same number. With respect to results in the various constituencies, the province of Quebec elected 73 Liberals and one Progressive Conservative. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon returned a total of 50 Progressive Conservatives and two Liberals. In the other provinces, the results were more mixed.

The Liberal Party thus attained an absolute majority position in the House of Commons, winning 147 of the 282 seats. Mr. Trudeau was re-elected Prime Minister on 18 February, regaining the post he had held until May 1979. The new Cabinet, composed of 33 Ministers, was sworn in on 3 March.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	15,799,274
Voters.	11,013,241 (69.7%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	66,784
Valid votes.	10,946,457

Political Group	Number of Seats obtained	Number of Seats held prior to Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Liberal Party.	147	114	114
Progressive Conservative Party	103	136	136
New Democratic Party	32	27	26
Social Credit Party.	—	5	6
Others	—	—	—
	282	282	282

*2. Distribution of Members of Parliament according
to Professional Category*

Lawyers, notaries, solicitors or barristers	69
Businessmen, industrialists, managers, mer- chants.	51
Teachers.	30
Farmers, ranchers, fruit growers, agronomists	21
Administrators.	20
Clergymen.	9
Physicians, veterinarians.	8
Political advisers.	8
Journalists.	6
Public servants.	6
Insurance agents.	6
Others.	<u>54</u>
	288*

* This figure exceeds the numbers of MPs due to the fact that some of them listed two professions or occupations.

3. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex (10 April 1980)*

<i>House of Commons</i>		<i>Senate</i>	
Men	268	Men	90
Women	14	Women	II
	282		101"

* 3 seats were vacant.

4. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Age Group (April 1980)*

<i>House of Commons</i>	<i>Senate</i>		
<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number</i>	
<i>of Members</i>	<i>of Members</i>	<i>of Senators</i>	
20-29 years	li	36-45 years	3
30-39	60	46-55	IX
40-49	107	56-65	36
50-59	80	66-75	35
60-69	22	Over 75	9
70-79	2		101*
	282		

* 3 seats were vacant.