

CANADA 201



The Federal Election Process

The Federal Election

Voters elect **Members of Parliament** (MPs) to represent their riding or constituency in the **House of Commons**, which has **338 seats**.

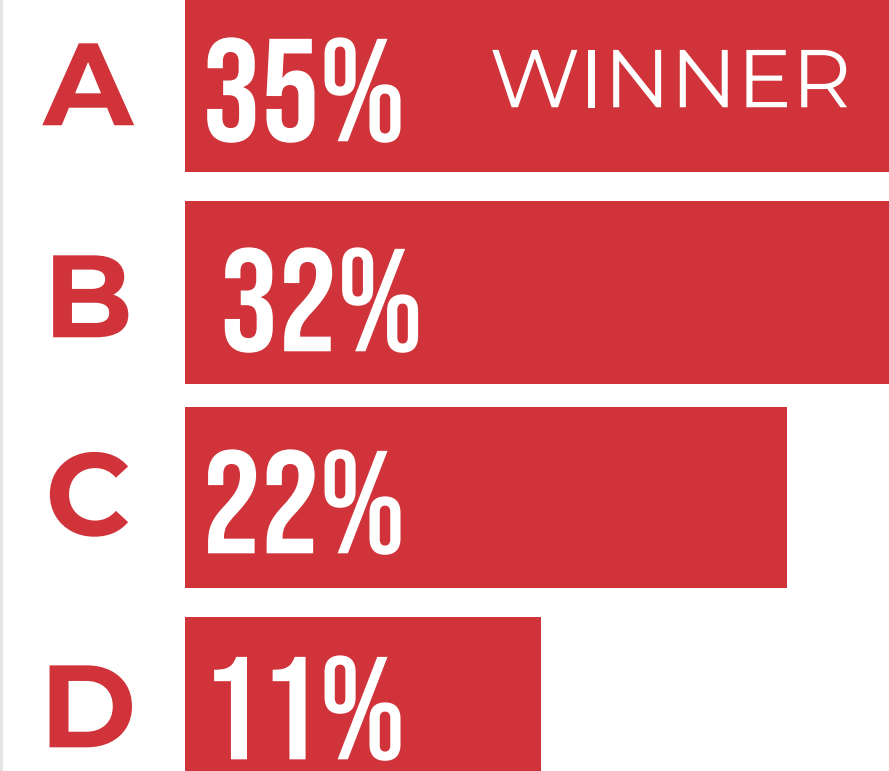
A candidate can either run with a political party or as an independent.



The Plurality System

Canada uses the **plurality system**. Voters vote for one of their riding's candidates. The candidate with the **greatest number of votes** wins the riding's seat in the House of Commons.

To win, candidates do not necessarily need to win the majority of the votes.



Determining the Prime Minister



Canadians do not directly elect the Prime Minister (PM). The party that wins the **greatest number of seats** in the House of Commons forms the federal government. Their **party leader** becomes the PM.

Party leaders run as MPs for their respective ridings and represent their party nationally. They must win their riding's seat to remain party leader or become the PM.

The PM is officially appointed by the **Governor General (GG)** who represents the current Canadian Monarch.

CANADA 2011



The Writs of Election

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A writ of election is a formal document ordering an election. The **Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)** creates a writ for every riding to be issued by the GG.

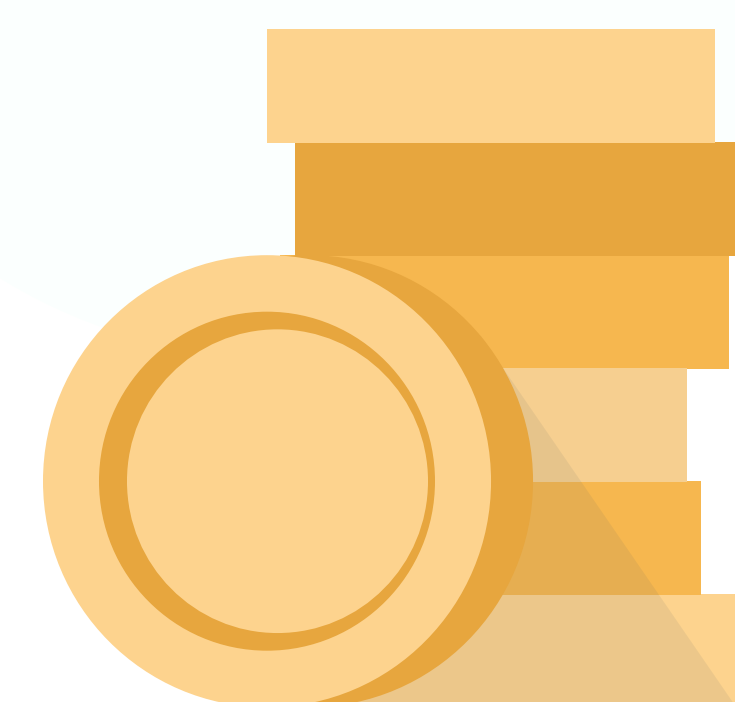
The CEO heads **Elections Canada**, the nonpartisan agency that administers elections.



The Pre-Writ Period

The **Election Modernization Act** created a pre-writ period leading up to dropping of the writs. The pre-writ period begins every **June 30** of the fixed-election year.

Parties face spending caps in this period: they can only spend **\$2,046,800** on partisan advertising. Third-parties can spend exactly half that amount.



The Writ Period

This is the official campaigning period. Party candidates cannot officially campaign before the election is called.

The writ period must last between **36** and **50** days.





Who Calls the Elections?

- The elections are called by the **Governor General**, on the advice of the current PM.
- The GG **dissolves Parliament** and sets the date of the election on the advice of Cabinet.

How is the Election Date set?

- The fixed date for the federal election is every **four years** on the **third Monday of October**.
- However, the PM can advise the GG to call a **snap election** at any time.



Governor General Rule

- On rare occasions, the GG has rejected the PM's advice. This famously happened in 1926 when PM Mackenzie King, faced with an imminent motion of censure*, asked GG Lord Byng to dissolve Parliament but was refused. Considered a constitutional crisis, the King-Byng Affair was used to gain legal freedom for commonwealth.

Dominions such as Canada. No GG has publicly deviated from the PM's advice since.

* A motion of censure is a vote to condemn the actions of an individual. It can be introduced by any MP and is passed by a simple majority.