

# Canadian Government & Politics

# The Constitution

- Codified/ Conventions give a degree of flexibility.
- Written in 1867 (Originally called the British North America Act)
- Patriated in 1982 by Pierre-Elliot Trudeau, The Charter of Rights and Freedoms added.
- Federal system
- Parliamentary system
- Constitutional Monarchy- Powers of the Queen invested in the Governor General (Head of State)

# The Legislature

- House of Commons

338 MPs (new boundaries for 2015 GE)

Direct election with FPTP

**Flexible terms** (elections must be held every 4yrs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in October, may be called earlier by Governor General & PM)

- Senate 105 Senators

Appointed by the Governor General on recommendation of the PM

Provincial representation- Regions are assigned a number of seats in the Senate

(24 each for The Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec & Western Divisions + 9 for Additional representation - Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, Nunavut)

# The Senate's Powers

- Constitutionally Co-equal powers- so full veto powers.
- By convention Senate rarely vetoes legislation, as it is seen to lack legitimacy
- Constitutional changes can only be delayed by 180 days, after which HoC can bypass the Senate.
- Liberals want to change appointment system for the Senate to reduce it's partisan nature. would still be indirectly elected
- The Senate is not permitted to introduce bills that impose taxes or appropriate public funds. This was introduced in 1982.

# The Executive

- **Governor General**
- **The PM** - appoints ministers and junior ministers, traditionally at least one senator is in the cabinet. PM chooses the Governor General, he/she is appointed by the Queen.
- **The Cabinet** - Government held to account with the conventions of individual and collective responsibilities.
- **Privy Council Office**- advisor to the PM, secretariat to the Cabinet, Public service leadership.
- **Trudeau (J) 's Cabinet** is gender balanced & ethnically diverse. (15 women & men), Most are under 50 years old.

# The role of the Governor General

- In office for 5 years- previously extended to 7 years
- Appoints the PM & other officials
- Gives Royal Assent to legislation
- Dissolves Parl.
- opens/closes parliamentary sessions

Officially calls elections- on demand of the PM or as a result of a vote of no confidence.

- Gives Speech from the Throne
- Provides consultancy for the PM, Cabinet or other senior officials.
- Commander-in-chief of the armed forces

# Provincial Governments

- 10 provinces

Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick.

- **Lieutenant Governors** - Queen's representatives at provincial level, role similar to the Governor General's.

- **Legislative Powers-**

Direct taxation of the province

Education, Hospitals, (pensions), prisons, municipal institutions

Natural resources

Property and civil rights, the creation of courts and the administration of justice, fines for breaking provincial laws

# Political Parties

- The Conservative Party (merger between The Reform Party or Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives in 2003 under Stephen Harper) in government from 2006 to 2015. Current leadership election- will be chosen on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- The Liberal Party (centre left) Justin Trudeau has been leader since 2013, new Canadian government since GE in October.
- The NDP (New Democratic Party) left wing party. Traditionally, the third party until 2011 where it was the Opposition Tom Mulclair has been leader since 2012.
- Other parties: The Greens, The Bloc Quebecois (runs only in Quebec- separatist party, wants to represent Qc's interest at the federal level)



# The 2015 General Elections

- Election campaign lasted 11 weeks (78 days) Held on the 19th of October 2015

## RESULTS:

- Liberal Majority with 184 seats (39.5% of the vote)
- Conservative Opposition 99 seats (31.9%)
- NDP with 44 seats (19.7% )
- The Bloc Quebecois with 10 seats (4.7%)
- The Greens with 1 seat (3.5%)
- turnout 68.5%—an increase of 7.4% over 2011
- <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/results-2015/>

# Important issues in the 2015 GE

- **Ban on the Niqab at citizenship ceremonies-** Tories & BQ pro ban, Liberals/ NDP/ Greens anti ban. This issue is said to have lost support for the NDP in QC which was the stronghold that lead the party to the Opposition in 2011.
- **TPP-** Conservatives: Stephen Harper called the TPP “a tremendous deal”, Liberals want to look at the agreement and start a public debate, NDP seem to be against it, Greens definitely against it.
- **Refugees-** All suggesting to increasing the intake of Syrian refugees, some variation on how they will achieve this (rate)
- **Economy-** Tories = tax cuts & deficit reduction, Liberals- tax breaks for the middle class & sustained deficit, NDP cuts for small businesses/ increase in corp tax.
- <http://www.macleans.ca/tag/federal-election-issues-2015/>

# Links

[http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/senatoreugeneforse/Book/chapter\\_3-e.html](http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/senatoreugeneforse/Book/chapter_3-e.html)

[http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jack-jedwab/canada-conservative-wedge-politics\\_b\\_9131886.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jack-jedwab/canada-conservative-wedge-politics_b_9131886.html)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/03/canada-election-parliament-stephen-harper>

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/default.aspx?Language=E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PDMbvgSSG4>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/poll-tracker/2015/>