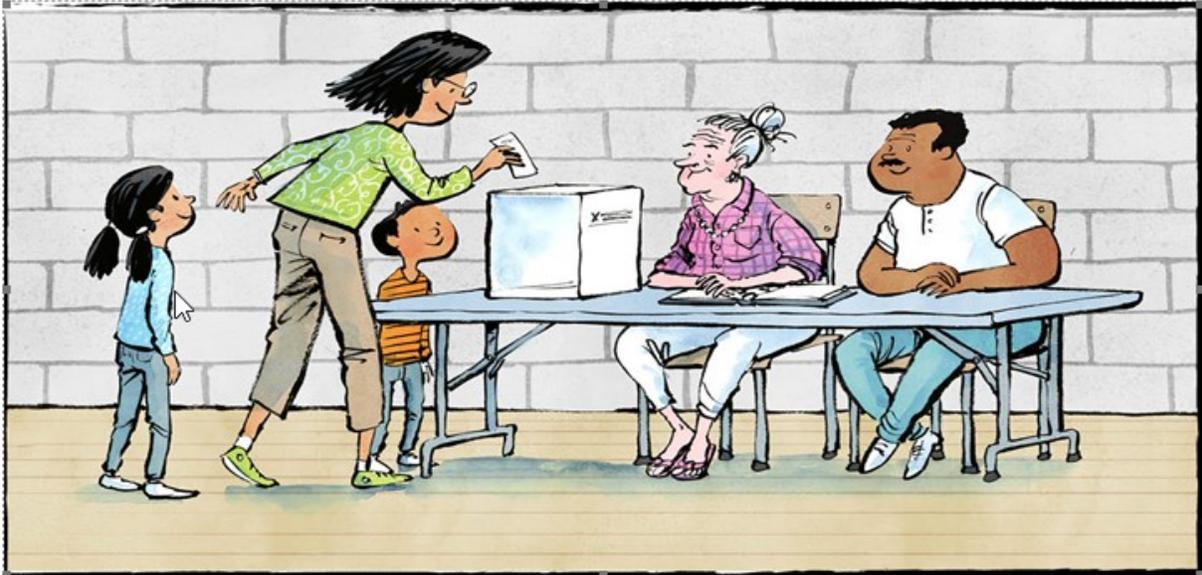


Election Day – October 21

Read this article.



How a federal election works

Federal elections usually happen every four years. The country is divided into 338 electoral regions, also known as ridings. Each is represented by one MP, chosen by the people in that riding.

During the campaign, candidates try to persuade people in their riding to vote for them. They knock on doors. They post on social media. They give speeches and run ads.

On election day, voters go to a **polling station**. Each voter is given a ballot. It lists the candidates in that riding. There's a blank circle beside each name. Voters put an X beside the person they want as their MP. At the end of the day, the votes are counted. The candidate with the most votes becomes the MP for that riding.

The 338 Members of Parliament go to Ottawa. They meet and debate in the Parliament Buildings. They make decisions about how the country should be run.

About political parties

Most candidates belong to a political party. It's a group of people with similar opinions about how Canada should be governed.

Some choose to be "independent" instead. They don't follow a party line.

Seven political parties had seats in the last Parliament. They are the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party, the People's Party, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

The party that elects the most MPs in an election forms the government. The leader of that party becomes Canada's Prime Minister (PM). The Liberals won the last election. They elected the most MPs. Their leader, Justin Trudeau, became PM.

The Prime Minister has more power than most MPs. The PM chooses who will get the top jobs in the Government. Who will be the Minister of Finance, for example? Or, the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

So voters have a big job. They are not just choosing an MP for their riding. They are also voting for a political party. They are deciding who will become Prime Minister.

The choice is ours

Being able to choose your government is a **democratic** right. People in some countries don't have that right. Canadians are fortunate that they do.

You would think Canadians would be excited to vote. Actually, voter turnout is not that high. In the last federal election in 2015, only 68 percent of voters cast ballots. In the 2011 election, it was 61 percent. The turnout is especially low among younger (18- to 24-year-old) voters.

Can we do better? Canadian comedian Rick Mercer thinks so. He says, "Take 20 minutes out of your day, do what young people all over the world are dying to do: vote."



A **polling station** is a place where people go to vote in an election. Many polling stations in Winnipeg are in schools or community centres.

The word **democratic** means allowing people to vote on what they think is best for the whole group. The Canadian government is democratic because people voted for it. The North Korean government is not democratic because the people did not vote for the leader..