



Canadian Election Guide 2015

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Election Basics

The 2015 election will be Canada's 42nd federal election. Canada's first official election happened 148 years ago in 1867.

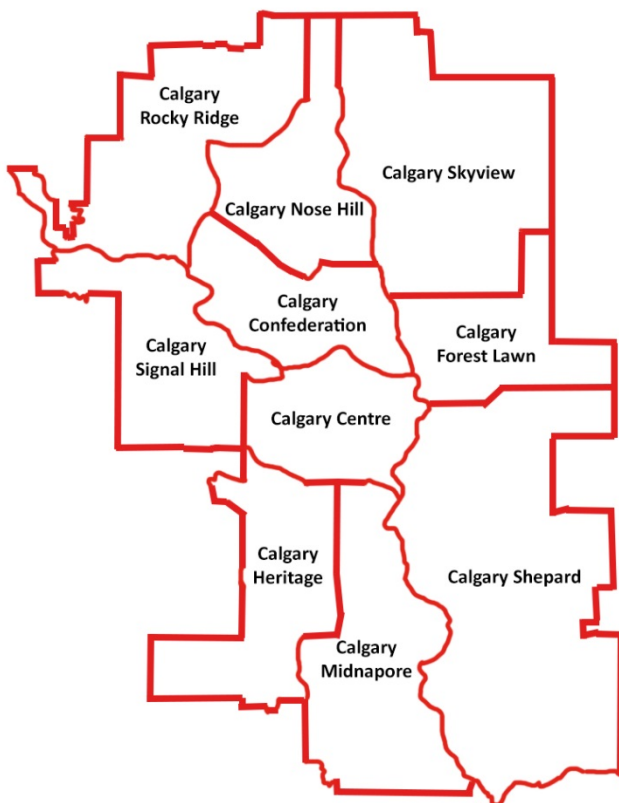
This election will decide who our Prime Minister (Canada's leader) and Members of Parliament or MPs (the elected officials who represent different ridings in Canada) will be for the next four years.

Date of Election: Monday, October 19, 2015

Polling Station Hours: Each polling station will be open from 7:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. Polling stations are where you go to cast your ballot (vote).

Calgary Ridings: Calgary is divided into 10 ridings, which means we have 10 MPs who represent the city. Different people are running for election in each riding, and you vote for people based on where you live.

Below is a map of Calgary's ridings:



Political Parties: There are many different political parties running against each other in this election. Each party has different ideas about how the country should be run, which they share in a document called a platform. The party with the most votes will become the Canadian Government. The party that gets the second most votes will become the Official Opposition.

This guide will look at the four main political parties in alphabetical order:

- Conservative Party of Canada
- Green Party of Canada
- Liberal Party of Canada
- New Democratic Party of Canada

The Parties

Conservative Party of Canada

Other Common Names: Conservatives, Tories
Party Leader: Stephen Harper
Year Party Started: 2003



Platform Basics:

Economy and Taxes: Increase Universal Child Care Benefit to \$160 per child 0-6 years old and \$60 per child 6-17 years old; reduce small-business tax to 9%; reduce corporate tax to 15%; promise to balance budget this year; changed eligibility to age 67 from 65 for Old Age Security benefits; examining ways for Canadians to voluntarily contribute more to Canada Pension Plan.

Environment: Approval of three national oil pipelines; reduce Canada's emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 by relying on provincial measures; move to low-carbon economy by 2050; eliminate use of fossil fuels by 2099.

Democratic Reform: Suspend appointments to the Senate to pressure provinces to accept reforms to it, or end the Senate; introduce legislation requiring a national referendum before first-past-the-post electoral system could be changed.

Infrastructure: Provide \$5.3-billion per year for provincial and municipal infrastructure; introduce Public Transit Fund to provide \$1-billion per year after 2019; \$150-million for Canada 150 Infrastructure Program to fund community and cultural projects for Canada's 150th anniversary.

Justice: Keep use and possession of marijuana illegal; quickly deport foreign criminals for serious offenses; imprison serious offenders for life; introduce mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes.

Social Issues: Commit to increase health funding to provinces to grow with GDP at guaranteed rate of 3% each year (currently providing 6% each year); reexamine Labour Market Development Agreements with provinces to reorient training towards needs of employers and job seekers; provide \$65-million business/industry associations to allow them to work with post-secondary institutions to align curriculums with needs of employers.

Green Party of Canada

Other Common Name(s): Greens

Party Leader: Elizabeth May

Year Party Started: 1983



Platform Basics:

Economy and Taxes: Eliminate personal taxes on incomes of \$20,000 or less; reduce small-business tax to 9% by 2019; increase corporate taxes to 19% by 2019; work with provinces to increase taxes on tobacco and alcohol.

Environment: Introduce fee-and-dividend system for carbon pricing to reduce fossil fuel use and encourage investment in green tech by private sector; accelerate construction of green infrastructure; ensure most of Canada's energy comes from renewable sources by 2025; work with provinces to ensure no new coal-fired electrical plants are built.

Democratic Reform: Eliminate first-past-the-post electoral system and consult Canadians to find new system; create independent process for choosing Senate appointments.

Infrastructure: Invest in national railway system; increase light rail investments; improve Via Rail service nationwide.

Justice: Repeal all mandatory minimum sentences; review Young Offenders Act; increase penalties for domestic violence.

Social Issues: Ban unpaid internships; increase access to apprentice programs; develop Youth Community and Environment Service Corps to provide employment at minimum wage for 40,000 youth each year with \$4,000 tuition credit awarded to each participant.

Liberal Party of Canada

Other Common Name(s): Liberals, Grits

Party Leader: Justin Trudeau

Year Party Started: 1861



Platform Basics:

Economy and Taxes: Reduce middle-class tax rate to 20.5%; create new tax bracket of 33% for annual incomes of \$200,000 or more; change Canada Child Benefit to increase payments to all families with children who make \$150,000 or less per year; reduce eligibility age back to 65 from 67 for Old Age Security benefits; increase Canada Pension Plan contributions and benefits; balance the budget in 2016; provide tax breaks to small businesses.

Environment: Oppose 1/3 national oil pipeline projects; support 2/3 oil pipelines; put price on carbon pollution that allows provinces to set own carbon pricing policies; invest in clean energies; work with provinces to establish emission reduction targets; increase amount of protected marine and coastal areas.

Democratic Reform: Strengthen Access to Information system; create a quarterly, detailed parliamentary expense report; create independent process for choosing Senate appointments; ban partisan government advertising; eliminate first-past-the-post electoral system and conduct study to find new system.

Infrastructure: Increase infrastructure funding through alternative sources of capital such as large pension fund investments; provide funding for affordable housing, public transit, transportation, climate change; host mayoral meeting in Ottawa each year to discuss infrastructure issues.

Justice: Legalize marijuana; require Supreme Court justices to speak both English and French; review mandatory minimum sentences.

Social Issues: Work with premiers to improve healthcare system; restore health funding to provinces to grow at rate of 6% per year; restore door-to-door mail delivery; reinstate mandatory long-form census; make Statistics Canada independent from the government.

New Democratic Party of Canada

Other Common Names: NDP, New Democrats

Party Leader: Thomas Mulcair

Year Party Started: 1961



Platform Basics:

Economy and Taxes: Balance budget in 2016; not raise personal taxes; increase corporate tax; reduce small-business tax to 9%; honour changes to Universal Child Care Benefit; reduce eligibility age back to 65 from 67 for Old Age Security benefits; increase Canada Pension Plan contributions and benefits.

Environment: Oppose 2/3 national oil pipeline projects; approve last national oil pipeline with more stringent environmental review process; create cap-and-trade system with market price on carbon emissions and invest revenue into greener energy sector; create fund to help Canadians retrofit homes/offices to save energy and money; redirect \$1-billion per year from fossil fuel subsidies to clean energy sectors.

Democratic Reform: Replace first-past-the-post with mixed member proportional system; end the Senate.

Infrastructure: Dedicate extra one cent of existing federal gas tax to core infrastructure; develop better transit plan with provinces; invest \$1.3-billion annually over next 20 years for stable public transit funding.

Justice: Decriminalize marijuana; require Supreme Court justices to speak both English and French; strengthen impaired driving laws.

Social Issues: Create \$15-a-day national child care program and create/maintain 1-million affordable child care spaces in Canada; restore health funding to provinces to grow at rate of 6% per year; restore door-to-door mail delivery; reinstate mandatory long-form census.

Common Questions

Question: *Why should I vote?*

Answer: It's your right and your responsibility! Every citizen aged 18 or older in Canada has the right to vote for the political party of their choosing. It is important to have your voice heard and to be included in decisions that impact you.

Question: *I'm only one person! What difference will my one vote make?*

Answer: Imagine if everyone thought that... no one would vote at all! Only 61 percent of eligible Canadians voted in the 2011 election; this means that **more than a third** of the country did not make their voice heard. A huge difference could be made in the results of this year's election if only an extra 10 percent of citizens voted.

Question: *I've never voted before; how do I get register to vote?*

Answer: You can register online at ereg.elections.ca until Tuesday, April 21. If you run out of time to do this online, you can still register on Election Day. You can do this by bringing your Alberta driver's license or identification card, or two pieces of authorized identification. You can see the full list of acceptable identification online at bit.ly/CanVoterID.

Question: *I moved recently; how do I vote in my new riding?*

Answer: You can update your voter information online at ereg.elections.ca until Tuesday, April 21. If you run out of time to do this online, you can still update your voter information on Election Day. You can do this by bringing your Alberta driver's license or identification card, or two pieces of authorized identification. You can see the full list of acceptable identification online at bit.ly/CanVoterID.

Question: *How do I know where to vote?*

Answer: Elections Canada will mail out a "Voter Information" card by October 1 to every household in the country. Otherwise, you can look up where your polling station is on the Elections Canada website, or call the Voter Information Centre at 1-877-422-8683.

Question: *I work on Election Day; how do I get time to vote?*

Answer: Under the [Canada Elections Act](#), employees must be given three consecutive hours to vote on Election Day if they wish to, and they cannot lose pay for the time they miss while voting. Polling stations will be open between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

If you work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., arrangements could be made either for you to start at 10:30 a.m., or leave work at 4:30 p.m. so that you have three hours to vote. If you work from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., you are expected to vote after work and would **not** be allowed to leave early or start late.

The important thing is to make arrangements ahead of time so that everything goes smoothly. Talk to your supervisor or manager if you need to sort out your schedule for that day. You can also choose to vote on one of the advance poll days, which fall on the Thanksgiving Day long weekend (October 9, 10, 11, and 12) this year.

Question: *I will need help with my ballot on Election Day; what do I do?*

Answer: If you need help reading your ballot or filling out your ballot, you can have someone assist you. You can bring a friend or family member with you to read it to you, and they can fill it out on your behalf. If no one can come with you, you can ask to have someone working at the polling station help you.

Question: *Will my polling station be accessible?*

Answer: It *should* be. Community centres and local schools are generally used as polling stations, and these are usually accessible for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, or have visual impairments. You can call the Voter Information Centre at 1-866-241-7765 for more information on accessibility.

Question: *How often does Canada have a federal election?*

Answer: An election is held every four years. However, the Governor General (the Queen's representative in Canada) may call an early election if he or she thinks it is necessary.

Definitions

Ballot: The piece of paper you receive at a polling station where you choose the candidate you want to vote for.

Canadian Government: The people in charge of the country who make important decisions about how things are run. This is made up of members from the political party that got the most votes.

Candidates: People who want to be chosen to represent their community as part of the government.

Election: When citizens of Canada choose who they want to represent them based on their own personal beliefs.

Member of Parliament (MP): The official title of someone who has been chosen to represent their community in the Canadian Government.

Official Opposition: The people who help keep the government responsible to the citizens of Canada. This is made up of members from the political party that got the second most votes.

Platform: A document that explains what each political party believes, and how they want to run Canada if they become the government.

Political Party: A group of people who have the same beliefs about how to run the province and want to become part of the government.

Polling Station: A place in your community where you go to vote during the election. There are also advance polling stations where you can vote a few days before the election.

Prime Minister: The leader of the Canadian Government.

Vote: Making your voice heard by choosing who you want to represent your community. This can happen at an official polling station, or by mailing your ballot in.

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