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ELECTORAL Insight

A MAGAZINE PRODUCED BY ELECTIONS CANADA TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN ELECTORAL MATTERS

Participation in the Electoral Process

The Involvement of Women, Youth and Ethnocultural Groups

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Indiana limestone, 121.9 x 182.8 cm, House of Commons, Ottawa

The base stone of *The Vote*, a sculpture on the east wall of the House of Commons chamber, shows four heads
with flowing hair whose mouths shape, in song, the first syllables of Canada's national anthem, "O-Ca-na-da".

Jean-Pierre Kingsley
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

Participation in the Electoral Process

A democracy achieves its potential when the participation of its citizens in the electoral process is strong. Simply put, the higher the participation in the process, the larger the consensus on the credibility and acceptability of its result. At Elections Canada, in 2000, as we put into place the reforms brought by a new *Canada Elections Act*, conducted Canada's 37th general election and marked the 80th anniversary of the office of Chief Electoral Officer, we sought to make the electoral system as accessible, fair and transparent as possible. These goals are meant to foster, encourage and assist participation in Canada's electoral system.

The new *Canada Elections Act* (Bill C-2) was passed by Parliament, received royal assent on May 31, 2000, and came into force on September 1, 2000. It marks another step in the constant evolution of our democratic system. The new Act reflects recommendations made by parliamentarians and the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing in 1992, and put forward in reports to Parliament in 1996 and 1997 from this Office. It also addresses decisions by several courts and builds on amendments to the Act that occurred in the past decade. The new Act reorganizes and clarifies the electoral legislation, requires greater disclosure of financial information by registered political parties, brings election advertising by third parties under the ambit of the statute, and makes information about our electoral system more accessible.

At the first election after Elections Canada was created 80 years ago, the lists of electors included the names of slightly more than 50 percent of the population. At recent elections, they have included an average of almost 70 percent of Canadians, largely due to measures implemented over the decades that removed property qualifications, extended the right to vote to women and lowered the voting age. While federal elections once offered a choice of two political parties and candidates, at recent elections they have involved ten or more registered parties and, in some electoral districts, as many candidates among whom to choose.

The fourth edition of *Electoral Insight* focuses on the participation of electors, candidates and political parties in federal elections and referendums. It particularly explores the challenges facing youth, women and members of ethnocultural communities who may wish to be fuller participants in Canada's electoral and political systems. I trust that readers will find here valuable insights on this matter, which will likely generate significant activity over the next few years.

This edition was prepared just before the 37th general election, which culminated with election day on November 27, and therefore contains minimal information on that election. The next issue of *Electoral Insight*, to be available in the summer of 2001, will contain more detailed information about the general election. ✖

Jean-Pierre Kingsley

THE Right TO VOTE:
THE HEART OF DEMOCRACY

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Our contemporary ritual of choosing representatives of the people by universal suffrage seems a product of the modern age. In fact, however, it is part of a historical, philosophical and sociological process that has taken us from a rationale of exclusion to the imperative of inclusion. The right to vote is inextricably linked to the building of democracy and the affirmation of freedom and equality.

The history of political thought from the Reformation to the philosophies of the Enlightenment is a history of spiritual enfranchisement. Previously, the individual's existence was subject to certain supernatural forces – such as God – over which one had no control. The Enlightenment philosophies – and the great revolutions that followed – enshrined freedom as an innate characteristic of the human being. The individual is free by nature, and nothing may hamper that freedom, not even the power of the state. To preserve one's freedom, the individual must adjust the political function so that it serves, rather than enslaves. This is Rousseau's *Social Contract*, whereby every individual holds a portion of power and the Law derives its legitimacy from universal participation in its definition. By associating the governed with the exercise of power, government wins the support of all those subject to it, as it preserves and, indeed, brings about their freedom. The means whereby the governed agree to delegate their authority is the franchise, which is, therefore, the link between the legitimacy of political governance and the liberty of human beings.

But in the late 18th century, this freedom, so dear to liberal political philosophy, did not apply to the many: it was the privilege of the few, who were usually nobles and landowners. The democracy of that time was, therefore, a democracy of exclusion. With all it brought in the way of suffering for the "ordinary people," the Industrial Revolution taught that, while freedom may belong to all, not everyone has the power to exercise it; the conditions have to be right for this to take place. Those conditions are to be sought in the equality that offers each person the capacity to exercise power. At this point, freedom is no longer seen as intrinsic to the human being; it is something acquired, and what is more, something to be won. So the right to vote is no longer seen as the instrument for preserving some innate human freedom, but as the means of realizing real freedom, by making all people equal. From this standpoint, democracy aims to include the greatest number in governance; in the 19th century, some thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill, even argued for the expansion of the franchise to women. It is this concern for equality that was to drive the great campaigns to win universal suffrage: equal capacity to participate in the designation of those who governed became an innate value of the human being, regardless of education, occupation, family connections or wealth.

In short, universal suffrage was one of the few tools available to societies to reconcile two values that have had a rather contradictory historical and philosophical past: freedom and equality. Freedom, because not only must each person be able to exercise freely the right to vote and choose representatives, but choosing them through universal suffrage is a guarantee that democratic freedoms will be protected. Equality, because everyone has the right to vote for representatives and everyone has intrinsically equal value in this process that leads to democratic legitimacy.

Political representation follows from the right to vote. In *The Spirit of the Law*, Montesquieu lays the foundations for the theoretical and legal articulation of laws: through the vote, the people participate in a process of designating representatives, rather than completely surrendering their power. The issue of the relationship between the governors and the governed then arises: in what ways will the former act in the place of the latter, and what is the role of the governed in the making of public decisions? An initial response lies in direct democracy, where the people are the main players in political representation and their joint will crystallizes the sovereignty of the nation. A second response is based instead on the notion of representative democracy, in which the people delegate to a third party the exercise of their sovereignty, this delegation being more or less pronounced, depending on the terms of the social contract. It is the electoral processes that effect this passage of authority from the people to the governors. These arrangements are at the heart of democracy, forming the leaven of legitimacy in political governance, which cannot do without the confidence of the people. In other words, democracy partakes of the rule of law, in that it exists within a state that is subject to the law as developed by the democratically elected representatives of the people, and a state that is careful to respect the integrity and inviolability of human beings.

In practice, democracy today is based on certain institutions that guarantee the rule of law. The various parameters of a democratic state include respect for human rights, a representative system, the division of power, political pluralism (in particular, a multi-party system and a legitimate opposition) and alternation of political power, free elections and reliable electoral processes. A reliable electoral process implies recognizing as fundamental rights

Photo: Elections Canada

An advance poll at the 1997 federal general election.

of the citizen the right to vote and the right to stand as a candidate, which, moreover, are equal for all citizens. This also presupposes universal and secret suffrage, freely exercised by the citizens. In addition, a reliable electoral process is one that plans regular, transparent elections, featuring a plurality of parties that enjoy certain advantages, such as freedom of expression; it has rules for organizing the popular consultation from start to finish; it prescribes certain structures for managing electoral operations and for independent adjudication that issues authoritative decisions. The manner in which elections are held is indicative of the quality of democratic life within a state.

Electoral participation and legislative representation are the direct consequences of universal suffrage: it is by exercising their right to vote in free, multi-party, transparent elections that the people transfer their sovereign authority to a limited group of representatives. High election turnout and equitable representation of the will of the people are indispensable for generating confidence among the people in their governors; without this no democratic governance is possible.

WOMEN and Political Participation in Canada

This image of a suffragist is believed to have been used for a postcard, c. 1910.
Photo: NA, DAP, 1971-271 (National Film Board Collection) item 87,384, negative no. PA-143958

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A study of women's participation in Canadian politics might be said to be the study of its absence. Historically, women have been excluded from political institutions, and according to the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, they remain the group with the most pronounced disparity between demographic weight and representation on decision-making bodies (Lortie Commission, 1991: 97). While it is true that women have been and continue to be excluded from political institutions, it is less true to say that they have refrained from political activity. But their political participation has been – as it continues to be – in areas traditionally considered non-political, such as social movements.

This article reviews the involvement of women in formal political institutions, such as political parties and the House of Commons. Any study of this subject is quickly confronted with the following question: is a woman in this context just "one of the boys," or different from them? This is what Carole Pateman (1989) calls "the Mary Wollstonecraft dilemma:" should women demand full participation in political life based on the common humanity they share with men, or based on their differences from men? In the former case, women's participation in politics stems from universal democratic rights. In the latter, this involvement is to be assessed in terms of their differences: it is because they are different from men that women must participate in politics – with the probable consequence of changing the very nature of politics and public decisions.

The Mary Wollstonecraft dilemma – Universality versus Difference – will guide our examination of the participation of women in Canadian politics. We shall deal with the following themes in succession: women as electors, as members of political parties, as candidates, and finally as parliamentarians, i.e. MPs or senators.

Women as electors

The first suffragette organizations emerged in Canada in the late 1870s. However, it was not until 1917 that women employed by the army and those with a close male relative in the Canadian Forces obtained the right to vote in federal elections. The following year, this right was extended to most Canadian women, in recognition of their contribution to the war effort. However, a closer examination of the arguments developed during the 1918 debates reveals the Universality vs. Difference dilemma, particularly among those advocating women's suffrage. For example, one line of reasoning associated with the Universality option was that Canada was entering an age of modernization, and that the enfranchisement of women was part and parcel of this forward-thinking approach. Others, arguing for the Difference option, maintained that women ought to be able to vote because Canadian society needed their particular skills to meet the new challenges ahead, notably in the area of social reform.

The Universality-Difference dilemma also generated many questions about the electoral behaviour of these new citizens. Would women be as interested in politics as men? Would they be as assiduous as men in exercising their right to vote? Would they vote like men, or vote as women? Studies today show that women demonstrate somewhat less interest in politics. But the indicators used are still relatively blind to the fact that socialization and social roles differ along gender lines. There are, in fact, very few models, even now, that allow girls to see politics as a sphere that is accessible to them. And Statistics Canada data show that women continue to be the ones primarily responsible for housework and child care, and they are also poorer than men. Consequently, they have less time than their partners to stay abreast of current events and invest effort in political parties, as well as less money to devote to political ends. However, research shows that women are as assiduous in fulfilling their electoral obligations as men. Finally, with regard to voting habits, the results of Canadian studies suggest certain gender-based differences. For instance, in the 1993 federal election, women were more attracted than men to the two parties then led by women (O'Neill 1998); in 1997, women were less inclined than men to vote for the Reform Party and more inclined to vote for the New Democratic Party (Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil and Nadeau 2000: 110-115). Research also shows that women and men react differently to various issues. For example, women are more resistant than men to the idea of curbing the welfare state; something no doubt related to the fact that, all other things being equal, their quality of life is often more closely linked to government's redistribution policies than is men's. In short, while the concept of Universality helps us to define certain aspects of the electoral behaviour of women, that of Difference is more often useful.

Women as members of political parties

Although most political parties claim a balance between men and women in their ranks, women's relationships to political parties are different from men's. Even when they had not yet secured the right to vote and stand for office, women were a significant presence in the parties in an organizational support or "pink-collar" capacity: making coffee, taking minutes, licking stamps, answering the telephone, etc. Today's reality is, of course, less stereotypical, but the same model of participation applies: the

… women's relationships to political parties are different from men's.

higher one looks in the party hierarchy, the fewer women one finds. Sylvia Bashevkin (1993) has shown that, in the early 1990s, about 30 percent of the riding association presidents in the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties (the only two that have formed a federal government since 1867) were women. However, women were a distinct majority in secretarial positions – a primarily operational role.

Women as candidates in federal elections

Canadian women acquired the right to stand as candidates in federal elections in 1919. However, this was not enough to make them citizens on the same footing as men, for only four women actually campaigned at the time, and only one entered the House of Commons. There have always been fewer women than men seeking seats in the Commons. As recently as the 1997 federal election, 1 672 persons stood as candidates, 1 264 men and 408 women – but only 286 female candidates were members of the five parties represented in the 35th Parliament. What is more, it used to be that women candidates would find themselves in ridings that were lost in advance, although it seems that this is no longer the case (Pelletier and Tremblay 1992, Studlar and Matland 1994, 1996).

Various factors explain why there continue to be fewer female than male candidates: socialization, social gender roles and so-called systemic barriers. In the latter category is the nomination process, which clearly appears to be problematical for women. Despite repeated appeals from certain national elites to increase the number of female candidates, some local elites remain reluctant to entrust women with the party colours on election day, a resistance that was identified even in the early 1970s by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. The argument is that the electorate would not be ready to elect a woman. And yet an analysis of the votes obtained by male and female candidates in a Quebec riding in federal elections from 1945 to 1993 clearly shows that, with the same qualifications, women receive more votes than men (Tremblay 1995). Furthermore, the nomination campaign represents a major financial obstacle for women (Brodie 1991), especially since this stage of access to political institutions is still not controlled by the *Canada Elections Act*. Another factor that limits the number of female candidates is
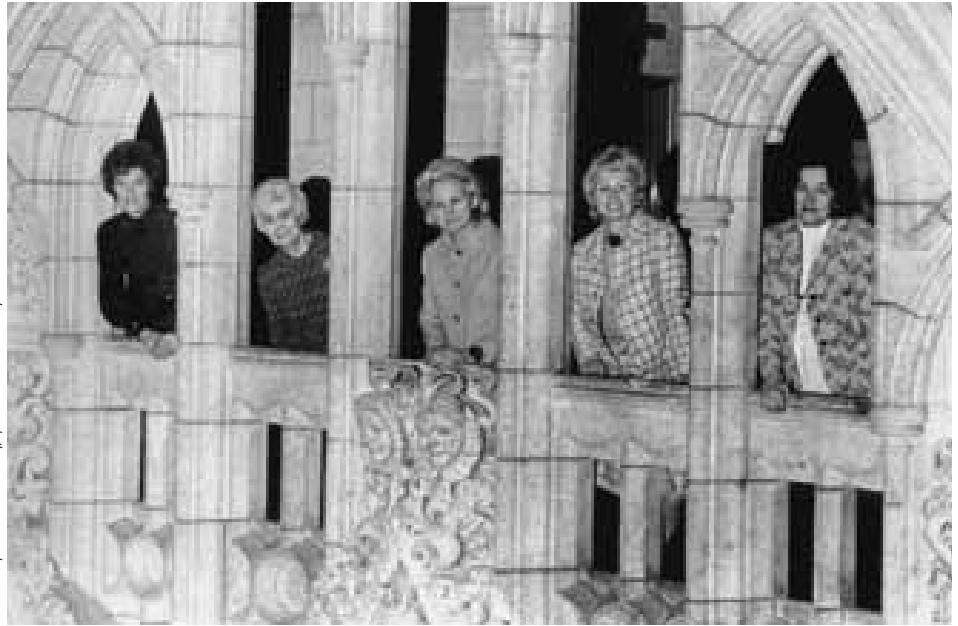

Photo: University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections and University Archives Division

This 1973 photo taken in the Centre Block of Canada's Parliament buildings shows five women members of Parliament (left to right): Flora MacDonald, Progressive Conservative (Kingston and the Islands); Grace MacInnis, New Democratic Party (Vancouver Kingsway); Jeanne Sauvé, Liberal (Ahuntsic); Albanie Morin, Liberal (Louis-Hébert); and Monique Bégin, Liberal (Saint-Michel). They were the only women elected in the 1972 general election to the House of Commons, which at that time comprised 264 seats. Four were elected to the Commons for the first time in 1972, the exception being MacInnis, who had been an MP since 1965. Sauvé, who would later become Speaker of the Commons and then Governor General, was the only female member of the federal Cabinet at the time the photo was taken. The photo is part of the Grace MacInnis archives at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

the nature of our electoral system: under our electoral rules, each party endorses just one person per riding. Although proportional representation does not guarantee an increase in the number of women candidates, there is no doubt that if a party can expect to elect more than one person in the same riding, it becomes more embarrassing if they are all men.

Women as MPs and senators

Are the women in Parliament like the men, or different from them? In 2001, they still account for less than a quarter of MPs; this puts Canada far behind Sweden, where parity is on the verge of being achieved. Paradoxically, it appears that the national elites are fairly comfortable with this situation: unlike numerous countries which have developed various strategies to encourage women candidates, the Canadian government has yet to adopt any significant measure to this end (the most recent electoral reform recognized child care costs as campaign expenses, which is

certainly a positive step, but plainly insufficient to increase the number of female MPs in the Commons). In this connection, an important issue for future electoral reform would be to place limits on spending during nomination campaigns. However, such an initiative is opposed by some, who see it as an impediment to the free play of democracy – a democracy that has so far functioned more on the model of exclusion than inclusion.

The presence of women in the House of Commons can be understood in terms of a double division, one that is vertical as well as horizontal. The former would suggest that the real positions of power are beyond the access of women, who remain at the bottom of the ladder of political influence. This is probably less true today, since certain women have held positions of great influence in recent Canadian governments. The horizontal division implies a separation of portfolios by gender, men being assigned those associated with production (such as finance, industry or commerce) and women assigned those associated with

reproduction (such as justice, immigration or children). This too is tending to change, although this model continues to be a fairly good guide to the composition of parliamentary committees.

Some recent research (Tremblay 1998, 1999; Trimble 1993, 1997) has shown that women could bring about certain changes in political life, notably by placing issues on the political agenda which, in their absence, might be ignored (such as the recent establishment of a parliamentary committee to study women's demands in the context of the World March of Women); by changing political style (e.g. in terms of language); and by taking a different approach to public policy (e.g. by adopting a more humanistic viewpoint). Further research is necessary to lend more force to these observations.

The Senate of Canada offers an interesting laboratory in this regard, since women there have now achieved a critical mass, i.e. 33 percent (34/103, with two seats vacant at the time of writing). There is a good deal of research that tends to demonstrate that, to have a significant impact on the culture of an organization (such as Parliament), women must occupy at least a third of the available space. Even though the Senate has specifically resisted the advent of women in its midst, it might become an important ally for a feminist project for the political representation of women.

> … to have a significant impact on the culture of an organization (such as Parliament), women must occupy at least a third of the available space.

presence in political institutions. Whereas the Mary Wollstonecraft dilemma opposes Universality and Difference, I propose instead that these two aspects be reconciled as one, using the notion of parity. Parity assumes that democratic forums should be composed of roughly half women and half men. Certain opposing voices suggest that citizenship is universal, and has no gender, no skin colour, no age, and so on. But a mere glance at the socio-demographic composition of the House of Commons is sufficient to reveal that, on the contrary, the citizen-representative is usually a white male, in the prime of life, etc. In calling for democratic institutions that harmonize rather than exclude differences, notably by including a more or less equal proportion of women and men, parity stands forth as the royal road to Universality. ✖

Conclusion

Women remain on the margins of federal Canadian politics, at least in terms of their

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Immigrants and Ethnoracial Minorities

IN CANADA:

A Review of Their Participation in Federal Electoral Politics

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This article reviews the state of knowledge about the involvement of immigrants and ethnoracial minorities in Canadian federal elections. Both "visible minorities" and the traditional ethnic groups of European descent (those apart from the two "majority," British and French, communities) are considered here.[1] The aim is, firstly, to provide a profile of their political engagement as ordinary voters[2] and as candidates and MPs and, secondly, to identify some of the main factors that explain their differing levels of participation in these spheres. Because analysts of electoral participation, indeed of Canadian politics in general, have paid marginal attention to immigrants as a distinctive category and have rarely ventured beyond a (British-French) bi-national perspective in the interpretation of ethnic politics, only a sketch of immigrant and minority activism and not a full-grained portrait can be provided.

The premise that guides this review is that greater knowledge about immigrant and minority electoral participation should be a key goal for Canadian researchers. Major insights are likely in a variety of topic areas, including the capacity of such individuals (who represent sizeable numbers) to assume active citizenship roles, the impact of political institutions and processes in both facilitating and limiting their involvement, and the consequences of their participation for the polity itself. The fact that a few relatively recent studies have reliably demonstrated that the foreign-born and minorities are generally active in Canadian politics magnifies the likely benefits of such lines of analysis. This newer understanding has challenged earlier characterizations of political passivity and has documented increasing ethnoracial diversity among parliamentarians, though important groups, especially visible minorities, remain under-represented.

Immigrants and minorities as voters

A few early studies in the 1960s and 1970s tended both to reflect and reinforce a pessimistic outlook on the ability of the foreign-born, especially, to acquire knowledge about the norms and values of Canadian politics and to assume participatory roles.[3] Correspondingly, more emphasis was placed on explanations for political passivity than on any possible correlates of activism. The general view was informed by the language and ideas of "assimilation" theory or complementary "socialization" notions, which emphasized the time-consuming difficulties that immigrants had in establishing themselves and/or the penalizing disruptions in their political learning as transplanted individuals. Specific negative factors included immigrants' limited social ties and uncertain connections to a work milieu that otherwise would

stimulate politicization and involvement, their often lower socio-economic status, a lack of host country language skills, and the existence of cultural differences that inhibit the transfer of political experiences. For their part, Canadian-born minorities were generally seen as being less participant than the two majority groups, either because they were viewed as being subordinate in ethnoracial terms or, in an extension of the immigrant-based argument, because their communities were still not as "deeply rooted" as the multi-generation majorities. For similar reasons, participation differences could be expected between more (e.g. Northern Europeans) and less (e.g. Southern Europeans) established groups.

In fact, this early literature generally made only limited distinctions between the effects of nativity and ethnicity. Without such distinctions, however, there is a risk of false inferences, such as attributing a community's lower participation level to ethnicity-related attributes when, in fact, it stems from a heavy concentration of recently arrived immigrants whose political integration is in a transition phase. Similarly, activism among immigrants (or the Canadian-born) may, indeed, vary according to community-linked differences. Moreover, it is important to employ multivariate techniques so that any inferences about the different effects take into account (control for) factors, such as socio-economic status, that are routinely correlated with participation.

Such refinements were not evident in Wood's 1981 publication comparing the political behaviour of East Indians and

... Canadian-born minorities were generally seen as being less participant than the two majority groups ...

non-East Indians in a Vancouver constituency.[4] Nevertheless, in finding near equality in the two groups' participation, also evident in surveys of voter turnout in the 1979 federal election, the study did challenge the traditional portrayal of minority passivity. A few subsequent endeavours, employing more appropriate methodological procedures, have been more effective in this regard. A study by Black published in 1982 focused on comparing immigrant and non-immigrant participation levels based on a 1974 Canadian national election survey of eligible voters.[5] While the data set provided for only crude ancestry distinctions both among the Canadian-born (British, French, "other") and foreign-born (British, non-British), the findings did reveal a general tendency for (naturalized) immigrants to match the participation levels of the native-born. Non-British immigrants were found to vote at only slightly lower levels, and they were as involved as the population at large in campaign activity. The same researcher was able to explore further ethnicity distinctions in a 1983 Toronto-area survey, which included subsamples of both Canadian-born individuals and immigrants originating from Britain and four geographical areas: Northern, Southern, and Eastern Europe, and the British West Indies. The study's broadest conclusions flow from an examination of the full array of nativity and ethnicity comparisons possible.[6] One confirmed that the immigration condition, rather

than minority status, was the principal source of lower participation levels, by demonstrating, for example, that among the Canadian-born, minority groups were as active in electoral (and non-electoral) politics as the British were. Nevertheless, with an exception to be noted, immigrants did participate substantially in Canadian elections and, indeed, the more established among them were as politically engaged as the native-born.[7]

Broadly similar findings by Chui and her associates, using the 1984 national election survey, suggest that these Toronto-based results were not idiosyncratic.[8] Even before the application of controls, the researchers found only minor differences between the foreign- and native-born, and only for those in Canada less than ten years was there a lesser likelihood of voting in federal elections. They also directly challenged the idea that a multi-generation presence is related to greater activism, finding, in fact, the highest electoral participation levels among the second generation and below average levels among fourth- and fifth-generation Canadians. Another study that has helped revise thinking about minority participation is Lapp's multivariate analysis of voter turnout in five Montréal ethnic communities, utilizing aggregate information from the 1991 census and official voting tallies.[9] For the 1993 election, she found that while the

Chinese and Jewish communities voted in lower numbers than the general population, Italians and the Portuguese matched that broader standard and the Greeks even surpassed it. Variability in participation across ethnic communities has also been evident in other studies. Earlier, Black discovered, as an exception, noticeably less voting and campaign activism by West Indian immigrants[10] while Chui *et al.* found lower than average turnout for those whose origins were Asian (and, to a lesser extent, Southern European).

The more recent literature has also improved understanding of the antecedents of immigrant and minority participation. In some cases, it has called into question earlier characterizations. For instance, Black found that immigrants who had been involved previously in the politics of their former countries, including the non-democratic regimes of Eastern Europe, exhibited the capacity to "transfer" those experiences, becoming active in Canadian politics.[11] More generally, the newer scholarship has provided greater balance in identifying correlates of activism, including the recognition that some immigrants and minorities have attributes, such as socio-economic resources, that routinely facilitate participation. Furthermore, additional emphasis has been given to mobilization perspectives and, in particular, to the role that the

> At the elite level, immigrants and minorities have expanded their presence among the ranks of candidates and MPs, although some groups have had more success than others.

ethnic community can play in providing contextual cues and opportunities that heighten the involvement of community members. For example, there is evidence that the exposure of immigrants to the ethnic media is moderately associated with involvement in Canadian politics.[12] In the Montréal-based study, interviews with elites from the five communities suggested their potential role as agents of voter mobilization.

Immigrants and minorities as candidates and MPs

At the elite level, immigrants and minorities have expanded their presence among the ranks of candidates and MPs, although some groups have had more success than others. Most of the evidence is in connection with winning candidates, including Pelletier's examination of MPs elected to Parliament in the 1965-88 period.[13] His data show that increases of a percentage point or two typified change from one election to the next, resulting in minorities holding 16.3 percent of the seats by 1988.[14] An uncharacteristically large increment, however, was associated with the 1993 election. Using a multi-method classification approach, one reliable enough to classify individuals with mixed minority-majority ancestry as well, Black and Lakhani estimated that 24.1 percent of the MPs elected to the 35th Parliament had minority origins while another 9.1 percent had mixed backgrounds.[15] For European minorities, the increase was sufficient to bring about proportionality between their share of seats and their share of the population, though some specific groups remained under-represented (e.g. the Portuguese). For their part, 13 visible-minority MPs were elected in 1993, up sharply from only 5 in 1988, but amounting to only

4.4 percent of the legislature and well below their population incidence of 9.2 percent estimated in the 1991 census. This representation deficit narrowed slightly following the 1997 election. The 19 visible minorities elected to the 36th Parliament held 6.3 percent of the seats, but this remained far below the 11.2 percent of the general population they comprised in the 1996 census.[16]

Visible minorities also remain under-represented among candidates running for the main contending parties, comprising 3.3 percent of the candidates in 1988 and 3.5 percent in 1993.[17] At the same time, there were more minority candidates as a whole in the latter election (21.9 percent), compared to five years earlier (18.2 percent). Finally, returning to the case of parliamentarians, it can be noted that altogether, minority MPs increased their percentage of seats by only about a point from 1993 to 1997, an increment more in keeping with the pre-1993 pattern. Overall, MPs of British and French origin still had a disproportionate presence in Parliament.

What accounts for this broad pattern of expanding diversity in Parliament over time, but usually in slow increments and with remaining deficits in representation? Though definitive answers must await further research, many of the likely explanatory factors have been identified already in the fledgling literature. Problems in access have especially been emphasized, including the effects of incumbency and financial constraints, of particular relevance at the local party level where candidate nominations are typically decided. Minorities, as with all new social groups seeking to gain more representation, must confront the general norm that discourages challenges to sitting members (who usually occupy the party's most desirable constituencies) and the potentially high costs of urban nomination contests (which, unlike general election campaigns, are unregulated). These impediments were mentioned by party activists and candidates of minority background who had been interviewed for a study by Stasiulis and Abu-Laban.[18] Complaints were also voiced about adverse treatment by the media, particularly the disapproving coverage given to the mobilization of community members during nomination contests and the parochial characterization of ethnic candidates as only being able to respond to "ethnic issues."

The exclusionary practices of the local parties were also cited. One, decried as well by visible-minority community leaders interviewed by Simard and her associates,[19] was the reliance on circumscribed recruitment networks that often did not extend into the ethnic communities. More generally, the predominant characterization was of the local parties as "gatekeepers," whose norms and practices – and in some instances racist attitudes and stereotyping – posed serious problems especially, but not exclusively, for visible minorities. Bias in the recruitment process is also suggested by the disproportionate nomination of minorities in constituencies with poor election prospects. (In fact, the upsurge in minorities elected in 1993 was, in part, fortuitous, due to unforeseen vote splitting between the Progressive Conservative and the Reform parties, which

A Toronto woman looks on as the deputy returning officer places her ballot in the ballot box during the 1963 general election. Thirty years later, when the electoral law was amended (Bill C-114, passed in 1993), voters became entitled to place their own ballots into the box.

paved the way for some Liberal minority MPs to win in low-prospect areas.) There is also evidence that visible-minority candidates and MPs have stronger than average credentials, raising the distinct possibility that their better qualifications are a requirement for them to counterbalance discriminatory attitudes.[20] At the same time, such exceptional qualities probably help explain their ability to enter such ranks, as does, for some groups, the winning of nomination contests through community mobilization, and possibly even some occasional party recruitment of ethnic candidates to attract votes in selected constituencies.

Other arguments that also may help explain why some groups are under-represented are tied to standard views emphasizing the different stages of community establishment. The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, in part, accounted for the smaller numbers of visible-minority MPs relative to those of European background by noting that the former faced a necessary "transition period" through which the latter had already passed.[21] While there is no doubt some truth to this, the fact that nearly half of all minority MPs were foreign-born suggests that birthplace alone is not a major obstacle at the elite level.[22]

Concluding reflections

What are some of the implications that flow from these more recent images of immigrant and minority expression in Canadian electoral politics? First of all, the need for more research is quite evident. One priority involves exploration of the differences in voter turnout across specific communities. Presumably this requires analysis both at the individual and community levels, the former involving such aspects as the extensiveness of group identification and commitment to group-linked political goals, the latter focusing on the community's "political culture," its institutions and leadership patterns, its partisan strategies, and also its dominant political concerns, including any homeland-connected issues. More research is needed, too, on office-seeking by minorities. The nature and impact of discrimination and bias, in particular, require more nuanced and empirically guided work. A concrete question is whether there is any truth to the belief, apparently prevalent in some party circles, that Canadian voters may be hesitant to vote for visible-minority candidates.

The examination of immigrant and minority participation also draws attention to the advisability of proposals for reform designed to encourage further involvement. Greater sensitivity to the linguistic (and other) needs of newer Canadians in the registration and voting processes has been the main thrust of proposed change at this level, but extending the franchise to landed immigrants has also been suggested. A more varied series of recommendations has been offered as a way of augmenting the number of minority MPs. Suggestions include incorporating a proportionality dimension into the electoral system (to allow for more "balanced" party lists), regulating nomination campaigns, imposing term limits on incumbents, and providing incentives for parties to be more proactive in recruiting minority candidates, particularly in more winnable ridings.

Immigrant and minority electoral participation also prompts further reflection on its consequences for a variety of issues, including debates about multiculturalism policy and the nature of representation of minority interests. As Kymlicka has noted, evidence of minority participation challenges the criticism that multiculturalism, in legitimizing distinctiveness, encourages separateness and aloofness from the mainstream.[23] A positive link between ethnic media consumption and Canadian participation also implies that political integration can be engendered in the context of diversity, as does Lapp's observation that Montréal community elites tended to use vote mobilization arguments stressing membership in the larger society, rather than those promoting community-centred interests.

Nevertheless, the extent to which more activism prompts responsiveness to minority concerns remains an important question, especially at the elite level. There is some evidence that minority candidates hold somewhat distinctive policy views,[24] though it is unclear how extensive their commitment is to the promotion of minority interests. Even if only some minorities, visible minorities most of all, are likely to be motivated by issues of particular salience to their communities, they still face significant constraints as representatives. Some pressures are universal, such as the

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discipline imposed by the party leadership to limit independent action. Others are particular to minority MPs, such as the challenge of balancing the representation of territorially-based interests defined by the constituency and community-based interests that are not necessarily limited to any particular locale. Advocates also risk being pigeonholed and losing credibility when they are perceived as being too strident in the representation of minority interests. This possibility stems, in turn, from the continuing domination of majority politicians and their tendency to define ethnic politics almost exclusively in terms of British-French relations.
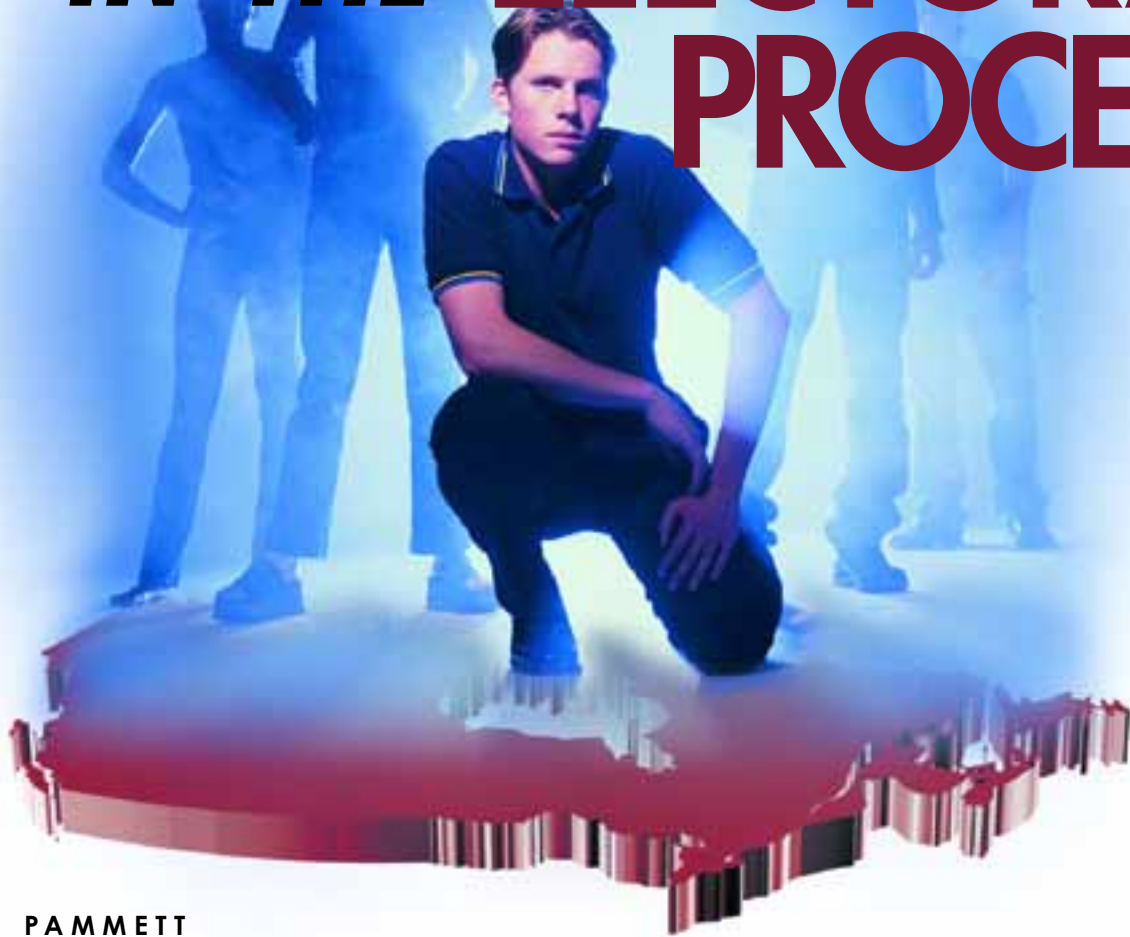
It remains to be seen whether further increases in the number of minority MPs will erode this traditional approach and replace it with one that more realistically reflects the full range of Canadian diversity. In the meantime, this review has demonstrated that immigrants and minorities, generally speaking, are active participants when it comes to electoral politics in Canada. ✖

ENDNOTES

1. This review does not examine the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

2. For an account of franchise restrictions that many ethnoracial groups, especially visible minorities, have faced historically, see Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, *A History of the Vote in Canada* (Ottawa, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997). Campaign activism is considered here as part of electoral involvement.

3. For brief reviews of this earlier literature, see T. Chui *et al.*, "Immigrant Background and Political Participation: Examining Generational Patterns," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 16 (1991): 375-96, and D. Stasiulis, "Participation by Immigrants, Ethnocultural/Visible Minorities in the Canadian Political Process," a paper presented at the Heritage Canada Research Domain Seminar on Immigrants and Civic Participation, Montréal, 1997.

4. J. Wood, "A Visible Minority Votes: East Indian Electoral Behaviour in the Vancouver South Provincial and Federal Elections of 1979," in J. Dahlie and T. Fernando, eds., *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Methuen, 1981), 177-201.

5. J. Black, "Immigrant Political Adaptation in Canada: Some Tentative Findings," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 15 (1982): 3-27.

6. J. Black, "Ethnic Minorities and Mass Politics in Canada: Some Observations in the Toronto Setting," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 3 (1991): 129-51.

7. The "more established" immigrants were defined as those who had spent at least 20 years in Canada, become citizens, indicated a commitment to stay, and developed some (English) language skills.

8. T. Chui *et al.* "Immigrant Background and Political Participation."

9. M. Lapp, "Ethnic Group Leaders and the Mobilization of Voter Turnout: Evidence from Five Montreal Communities," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 31 (1999): 17-42. Note that controls for citizenship acquisition and period of immigration were applied.

10. Black, "Ethnic Minorities and Mass Politics in Canada."

11. J. Black, "The Practice of Politics in Two Settings: Political Transferability Among Recent Immigrants to Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 20 (1987): 731-53.

12. J. Black and C. Leithner, "Immigrants and Political Involvement in Canada: The Role of the Ethnic Media," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 20 (1988): 1-20.

13. A. Pelletier, "Politics and Ethnicity: Representation of Ethnic and Visible Minority Groups in the House of Commons," in K. Meygery, ed., *Ethno-cultural Groups and Visible Minorities in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), 101-59. See also R. Ogmundson and J. McLaughlin, "Trends in the Ethnic Origins of Canadian Elites: The Decline of the BRITS?" *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 29 (1992): 227-41.

14. Compare with Ogmundson and McLaughlin, "Trends in the Ethnic Origins of Canadian Elites."

15. J. Black and A. Lakhani, "Ethnoracial Diversity in the House of Commons: An Analysis of Numerical Representation in the 35th Parliament," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 29 (1997): 1-21.

16. J. Black, "Minority Representation in the Canadian Parliament Following the 1997 Election: Patterns of Continuity and Change," paper presented at the Fourth National Metropolis Conference, Toronto, 2000.

17. These estimates reference the three older parties in 1988, and include Reform and the BQ for 1993.

18. D. Stasiulis and Y. Abu-Laban, "The House the Parties Built: (Re)constructing Ethnic Representation in Canadian Politics," in Meygery, ed., *Ethno-cultural Groups and Visible Minorities*, 3-99.

19. C. Simard *et al.*, "Visible Minorities and the Canadian Political System," in Megyery, ed., *Ethno-cultural Groups and Visible Minorities*, 161-261.

20. J. Black, "Entering the Political Elite in Canada: The Case of Minority Women as Parliamentary Candidates and MPs," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 37 (2000): 143-66.

21. Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, *Reforming Electoral Democracy*, Vol. 1. (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991), 101-05.

22. Pelletier found that the proportion of foreign-born among minority MPs increased over time, reaching 42 percent in 1988. The figure for 1993 is about 45 percent.

23. W. Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford, 1998), 18-22.

24. J. Black, "Representation in the Parliament of Canada: The Case of Ethnoracial Minorities," in B. O'Neil and J. Everitt, eds., *Political Behaviour: Theory and Practice in a Canadian Context* (Toronto: Oxford, forthcoming).

YOUTH IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

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One of the most consistent findings in social science research on elections has been that young people choose to vote at lower rates than older citizens. It is common in Canadian federal elections to find a 10 to 25 percent difference in voting turnout between voters under 25 and those over 65.[1] Thus, while young people are somewhat less likely to vote, this is a difference of degree rather than a fundamental population division on the age factor. Furthermore, when we place the focus on those eligible to vote for the first time by reason of attaining voting age, their turnout rate has not been consistently lower than that of other young people.[2] It simply appears to be the case that there is an initial period of time after turning 18 when a young person is less likely to take full part in the exercise of the franchise.

The causes and consequences of the phenomenon of lower youth electoral participation are very much in dispute. One reaction is simply to attribute the situation to a natural focus of young people on establishing themselves in the realms of education, occupation and relationships, all very time-consuming pursuits. Such a *life-cycle* explanation predicts that young people will more fully enter the public realm, through voting in elections and participating in politics more generally, when the immediate formative projects just described are established, and when the subjects of politics become more relevant to a newly established family or work situation. This school of thought sees no particular problem in lower levels of youth involvement, as it assumes that political socialization is a life-long process.

To some extent, this point of view is buttressed by scholarly analysis in what is left of the once-flourishing research field of political socialization. Thirty years ago, many theories and researchers' agendas were based on the premise that early learning of political principles by children and adolescents was fundamental to their later beliefs and actions. For a number of reasons, the assumption of the "persistence" of early learning (the so-called "primacy principle") became less persuasive.[3] Most important, the supposed stability throughout life of patterns of beliefs and behaviours learned in the formative years was questioned by many studies showing how such political orientations were actually subject to considerable variability. In Canada, for example, high degrees of volatility in party identification over short periods of time, together with instability in voting behaviour, made it difficult if not impossible to cling to a model whereby party loyalties were learned from parents and lingered through life for Canadian voters.[4]

In distinction, another view sees lost societal opportunities, and perhaps potential societal problems, in the slow and incomplete integration of young people into politics. Young people *are* interested in political participation, it can be argued; they are just not interested in choosing among, and working for, conventional political parties. A study done by Raymond Hudon and colleagues at Laval University for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing shows a good deal of latent or indirect interest of young people in participation.[5] This manifests itself in a vigorous group life for youth, and also in a concern for community over individual benefits. If youthful enthusiasm and altruism is not accommodated within the appropriate institutions (schools, parties, elections) much will be lost in the way of potentially creative contributions, which involvement could activate.

When political attitudes measuring confidence in institutions and processes are examined within different age groups in the electorate, the resulting relationships are often curvilinear. That is, the youngest age group, those 18-24, is less cynical and distrusting in politics than those immediately older than they are. Thus, tables sometimes show the youngest and oldest age groups (under 25, and over 60, say) looking more like each other than they do to age groups closer to themselves. Neil Nevitte, analyzing data from the World Values Study, shows that, in both Canada and the United States, confidence in government and non-government institutions starts out quite high, dives among those in the 25-34 age-group, and gradually increases thereafter.[6] At other times, young people show up as more supportive than any other group in the population. For example, a public opinion survey sponsored in 2000 by the Institute for Research on Public Policy in connection with their project on "Strengthening Canadian Democracy" found that the 18-29 age group expressed more satisfaction with democracy, government and politics in Canada than any other age group.[7] Such findings are supportive of

Election simulations based on Elections Canada's simulation kits give young students their first experience with voting. Grade seven students enjoy voting and serving as the polling station officials in the garden court of the Bank of Canada, in Ottawa.

one of the earliest principles of political socialization research – that children often start out with a relatively positive, supportive, even "benevolent" view of political leadership and institutions.[8]

If youth, then, are reasonably supportive of democracy and political institutions, and also by nature desire to participate when such activity can influence the conduct of their own lives, it follows that the lower levels of young peoples' participation in conventional political activity may occur because meaningful participative opportunities are lacking in the world of politics they encounter. It also may be that young people are not taught about politics in such

a way as to encourage their direct participation. It seems to me that there are three areas in which political and educational reforms could stimulate the involvement of young people and enhance the scope of democracy in Canada.

1 TEACH "CIVICS" IN A MORE PARTICIPATIVE MODE

Curriculum reform has been rife in the elementary and secondary schools of most of our provinces. Regardless of their various motives for promoting such change, politicians and educators are dealing with new curriculum opportunities to teach "civics" to young people. Both Ontario and Quebec, for example, are introducing new citizenship courses in their high schools. But will these involve more than the traditional teaching about constitutions, institutions, rights and duties? More important, will they involve active participation by the students in codifying and articulating political issues and policy alternatives, either in the classroom utilizing simulations, or in the real world of groups and politics? There are some promising signs. The new Ontario Grade 10 civics curriculum segment states that students are required to "participate effectively in a civil action or project of interest to them and of importance to the community (e.g. attend public hearings, plan religious or cultural event, join special interest group, write letters to the editor.)"[9] If students can become participants in defining issues of interest to them and advancing them through collective action, crucial elements of what Ken Osborne calls the "pedagogy for democratic citizenship" can be established.[10]

Elections Canada has produced two election simulation kits to aid in the education process at both junior and senior levels. The junior kit, designed for children between 5 and 10 years old, takes the students through a simulated campaign for class mascot, and then conducts a vote.[11] The senior kit, *Canada at the Polls!*, takes students through the basic process of holding an election, and can be adapted for whatever election the group wishes to hold.[12] The agency reports that approximately 2 000 kits are distributed to schools each year.[13] Also available from Elections Canada is an interactive CD-ROM, *Exploring Canada's Electoral System*, a guided tour of the electoral system through a polling station, the office of a returning officer, Elections Canada's offices, a campaign headquarters and the Chamber of the House of Commons. Since 1998, Elections Canada has received almost 20 000 orders, mostly from schools, for this learning tool.

In addition, voting exercises such as the UNICEF National Election for the Rights of Youth, held in 1999, and the "Our Kids Can Vote" municipal voting exercise, held in Toronto and other cities in November 2000, can usefully involve children in the electoral process through actual participation. In the United States, a massive operation called "Youth e-Vote" organized an Internet ballot of all high school students a week before the presidential election took place. Votes were cast for the actual candidates in the election.[14]

2 REDUCE THE VOTING AGE

Simulated voting, while useful, is no real substitute for the actual participation of young people in regular voting. In some countries, most notably Brazil, the voting age has been reduced to 16 years.[15] Brazil makes voting compulsory for those aged over 18, but optional for 16- to 18-year-olds, and close to a quarter of a million

This photo shows mascots serving as candidates, and Elections Canada's Community Relations Officer Denise McCulloch during an election simulation for families who visited a Montréal shopping centre last Easter.

voters in that age category had registered to vote by the time of the 1994 presidential elections.[16]

The possibility of reducing the voting age to 16 in Canadian federal elections was considered by the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing in its 1991 report. In part, this attention was motivated by a concern that establishing the age of 18 as the lower limit of voting eligibility was an arbitrary infringement of section 3 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees every citizen of Canada the right to vote, and section 15, which prohibits discrimination based on age. According to one legal scholar consulted by the Commission, it is not clear how the

Supreme Court would evaluate a challenge to attempts by the Government to justify excluding citizens under 18 as being within the "reasonable limits" prescribed in section 1 of the Charter for the curtailment of rights.[17] Despite this, and despite the conclusion offered in another study that the reduction of the voting age to 16 would be a "low-risk endeavour, in the sense that it would not produce a major impact on the political process and the high schools,"[18] the Royal Commission concluded that Canadian society was not yet ready for such a change, but that "Parliament should revisit the issue periodically."[19] Given the overall decline of the voting rate in recent federal elections,[20] it would be appropriate to revisit the issue now.

3 MAKE GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS MORE PARTICIPATIVE

With the increased concern about public disenchantment with their political representatives in recent years has come renewed interest in ways to involve the public directly in the political process. While "participatory democracy" has always been an important strand of democratic theory,[21] recent interest in it has often involved the application of new Internet communications technology to the logistical problems of getting the citizenry directly involved with government. On-line discussion and political involvement groups now abound, and most organizations interact with their members through the Internet. With regard to elections specifically, candidate and party Web sites are now *de rigueur* for campaigns, and on-line voting is being studied by the governments of many countries.[22]

It is well recognized that the leaders in the rapid technological advances of recent years have been young people. It is also commonplace to observe that teenagers often are much more aware of, interested in, and comfortable using the Internet technology that delivers these services, than are their elders. New participative institutions using the Internet are perfectly suited to many of today's youth, and provide a major opportunity to involve them directly in politics and elections. ✖

ENDNOTES

1. In a study the author did for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing using pooled Gallup Poll data for 1984, the difference was 15 percent. See Jon H. Pammett, "Voting Turnout in Canada," in Herman Bakvis, ed., *Voter Turnout in Canada* (Toronto, Dundurn, 1991), p. 40. In the 1997 Canadian Election Study, the difference in turnout between under 25s and all older voters was 11 percent, as reported by Tony Coulson in "Voter Turnout in Canada: Findings from the 1997 Canadian Election Study," *Electoral Insight*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (November 1999), p. 19. My own analysis of a POLLARA post-election survey from 1997 shows a difference of 25 percent between those under 25 and those over 65. Percentage differences can vary depending on the age brackets being compared, since the older age groups report voting at very high rates. In the POLLARA survey, for example, 95 percent of the over-65 age group reported casting a ballot. The overall correlation between age and voting turnout, as measured by Cramer's V, is normally around .2, indicative of a modest, statistically significant, correlation.

2 . Jon H. Pammett and John Myles, "Lowering the Voting Age to 16," in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Youth in Canadian Politics: Participation and Involvement* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), p. 99.

3. David O. Sears, "Whither Political Socialization Research? The Question of Persistence" in Orit Ichilov, ed., *Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), pp. 69-97.

4. See Harold D. Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett, *Absent Mandate: Canadian Electoral Politics in an Era of Restructuring* (Toronto, Gage, 1996) and, by the same authors, *Political Choice in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1979).

5. See Raymond Hudon, *et al.*, "To What Extent are Today's Young People Interested in Politics? Inquiries Among 16- to 24-Year-Olds," in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Youth in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), pp. 3-60.

6. Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference* (Peterborough: Broadview, 1996), pp. 59-61.

7. Paul Howe and David Northrup, *Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Canadians*, in *Policy Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 5, July 2000, p. 51.

8. Fred Greenstein, *Children and Politics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

9. Source: Ontario Ministry of Education Web site: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/curricul.html.

10. Ken Osborne, *Teaching for Democratic Citizenship* (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves, 1991) Chapter Three.

11. Elections Canada and Elections N.W.T., *Choosing Our Mascot* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 1997).

12. Elections Canada, *Canada at the Polls!* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 1999).

13. Denise McCulloch, Community Relations Officer, Elections Canada, personal communication, August 9, 2000.

14. Details can be found at www.election.com.

15. The voting age in Nicaragua and Cuba is also 16. In Iran, the voting age is 15.

16. J. Ray Kennedy, "Painted Faces Are Not Enough," *Elections Today*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

17. Patrice Garant, "Revisiting the Voting Age Issue Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms," in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Youth in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991) p. 87.

18. Pammett and Myles, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

19. Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, *Reforming Electoral Democracy*, Volume 1 (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1991), p. 49.

20. The 67 percent turnout in 1997 was the second-lowest in the twentieth century. See Elections Canada, *A History of the Vote in Canada* (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), p. 102.

21. See, for example, C. B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); and Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

22. See *Electoral Insight*, Vol. 2, No. 1, June 2000, for articles on "Technology in the Electoral Process." Some recent worldwide developments were outlined in *The Economist*, June 24, 2000, in a special section on "The Next Revolution: Government and the Internet."

REFERENDUMS
in Canada:

A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

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While representative democracy limits the participation of electors to voting in elections, direct democracy allows elector participation in the formation of public policy by asking electors to vote on issues, rather than for a candidate. Increasingly, the political climate in Canada is leaning towards greater use of the instruments of direct democracy.[1] According to the 1997 Canadian Election Study, over 73 percent of respondents thought that referendums[2] should be conducted regularly or at least occasionally.[3]

Since Confederation, referendums have been held by all Canadian jurisdictions except for the Yukon (see Table 1). Issues of great importance to the nation have been decided through referendums. These decisions include, for example, whether Canadians would be conscripted to fight in the Second World War, whether Newfoundland would join Confederation, whether the Constitution of Canada should be renewed, and whether the province of Quebec should proceed to a new economic and political partnership with the rest of Canada. Table 2 outlines the issues and results of the most recent referendum by jurisdiction. With such issues on the line, it is important to understand the rules that guide the administration of referendums in Canada.

All jurisdictions in Canada, with the exception of Ontario, currently have some legislative provisions pertaining to the conduct of a referendum. These provisions, in some cases, are included in a separate Act, while in other cases they form part of the legislation governing elections. Canada, Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut all possess detailed referendum legislation or extensive referendum regulations.

Federally and in Quebec, the Chief Electoral Officer has the authority to make regulations by adapting the legislation pertaining to elections for the purposes of a referendum. In all other jurisdictions, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can make regulations at the time a referendum is proclaimed.

Most jurisdictions allow a referendum to be called on any issue of public concern, although at the federal level any referendum must deal with a question relating to the Constitution of Canada. In Alberta, a referendum under the *Election Act* may deal with any matter of public concern, but the *Constitutional Referendum Act* requires that a referendum must be called before the provincial government authorizes an amendment to the Constitution of Canada. A similar situation exists in British Columbia, where any amendment to the Constitution of Canada must be put to a referendum under the *Constitutional Amendment Approval Act*, while a referendum on any matter of public interest may be called under either the *Referendum Act* or the *Election Act*. In Quebec, a referendum may be conducted on any matter, including a bill of the National Assembly, provided that the bill includes a provision at the time of tabling allowing it to be put to electors in a referendum. Nova Scotia and Manitoba, while they do not have any general referendum legislation, do have provisions for the conduct of a referendum on very specific issues. In Nova Scotia, the provincial Liquor Commission may conduct a referendum in a community to seek authorization to sell alcohol in that community. In Manitoba, meanwhile, the government cannot proceed with an increase in the rate of taxation in the province unless the increase is approved through a referendum.

Referendums are usually proclaimed by the Governor in Council (for Canada), the Lieutenant Governor in Council (for the provinces) or the Commissioner in Council (for the territories), as the case may be. However, as noted earlier, the National Assembly of Quebec may authorize a bill to be put to electors. Similarly, the Saskatchewan *Referendum and Plebiscite Act* allows a referendum to be directed by the Legislative Assembly. In addition, Saskatchewan permits a referendum to be initiated by a petition signed by 15 percent of electors. Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada with such a provision.

In most Canadian jurisdictions, there is no formal approval process for the adoption of the text of the referendum question. A formal approval process does exist, however, federally and in Quebec. The text of the question or questions for a federal referendum must be put forward in the House of Commons and approved by both the House of Commons and the Senate. In Quebec, debate on the text of a proposed referendum question is business that takes precedence over all other matters before the National Assembly. In the case of Nova Scotia, the exact wording of the question to be asked is specified in the *Liquor Control Act*. In Saskatchewan, in the case of a petition-initiated referendum, the proposed question

comes from the elector who is sponsoring the petition. The minister to whom the petition was submitted may either accept the wording of the question, or file an application with the court, if the minister deems that a change of wording is advisable. The court may then approve the question as it stands, change the wording to make the question clearer, or determine that the subject matter is not within the jurisdiction of the provincial government, thereby cancelling the referendum.

TABLE 1		
Referendums conducted in Canada, 1867-2000		
Jurisdiction	**Dates of referendums**	**Total**
Canada	1898, 1942, 1992	3
Newfoundland	1915, 1948 (2), 1995, 1997	5
Prince Edward Island	1878, 1901, 1929, 1940, 1948, 1988	6
Nova Scotia	1920, 1929	2
New Brunswick	1920, 1921, 1967	3
Quebec	1919, 1980, 1987, 1992, 1995	5
Ontario	1902, 1919, 1921	3
Manitoba	1892, 1902, 1916, 1923 (2), 1927, 1952	7
Saskatchewan	1913, 1916, 1920, 1924, 1934, 1956, 1991	7
Alberta	1915, 1920, 1923, 1948, 1957, 1967, 1971	7
British Columbia	1909, 1916 (2), 1920, 1924, 1937, 1952 (2), 1972, 1991	10
Yukon	–	0
Northwest Territories	1982, 1992	2
Nunavut	1997	1

Number in brackets indicates the number of referendums conducted that year, if more than one.

In most jurisdictions, a referendum may be conducted at any time, either on a separate date or simultaneously with a general election. However, neither a federal referendum nor a referendum in the province of Quebec may be conducted during a general election. In addition, two referendums on the same question or topic cannot be held during the same sitting of the Quebec National Assembly. Conversely, in New Brunswick a referendum may *only* be held in conjunction with a provincial general election. In Alberta, a referendum may be held in conjunction with either a general or municipal election, or on a separate date.

In a majority of Canadian jurisdictions, the results of referendums are consultative in nature only. However, in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the results may be binding on the government under specific conditions. In Alberta, the results of a referendum pertaining to the Constitution of Canada are binding on the Legislative Assembly if the majority of ballots cast vote the way on the question stated. In British Columbia, a referendum under the *Referendum Act* or the *Constitutional Amendment Approval Act* is binding if more than

Results of the most recent referendum/plebiscite in each jurisdiction

JURISDICTION	DATE	REFERENDUM OR PLEBISCITE	QUESTION(S)	RESULTS (%) YES	NO	VOTER TURNOUT (%)
Canada	October 26, 1992	Referendum	Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992?	45.7	54.3	71.8
Newfoundland	September 2, 1997	Plebiscite	Do you support a single school system where all children, regardless of their religious affiliation, attend the same schools where opportunities for religious education and observances are provided?	72.4	27.2	53.0
Prince Edward Island	January 18, 1988	Plebiscite	Are you in favor of a fixed link crossing between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick?	59.5	40.2	65.0
Nova Scotia	October 31, 1929	N/A	Concerning retention of prohibition	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Brunswick	October 23, 1967	Plebiscite	Are you in favor of lowering the voting age from 21 years of age to 18 years of age?	32.7	67.3	78.7
Quebec	October 30, 1995	Referendum	Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the Bill respecting the future of Quebec and the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?	49.4	50.6	93.5
Ontario	April 18, 1921	N/A	Concerning liquor importation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Manitoba	November 24, 1952	Referendum	Do you wish to continue to sell your oats and barley as at present?[1]	89.2	10.8	N/A
Saskatchewan	October 21, 1991	Plebiscite	1. Should the Government of Saskatchewan be required to introduce balanced budget legislation?	79.7	20.3	80.6
			2. Should the people of Saskatchewan approve, by referendum or plebiscite, any proposed changes to the Canadian Constitution?	79.3	20.7	80.5
			3. Abortions are legally performed in Saskatchewan hospitals. Should the Government of Saskatchewan pay for abortion procedures?	37.4	62.7	80.8
Alberta	August 31, 1971	Plebiscite	Do you favour Province-wide daylight saving time?	61.5	38.5	70.3
British Columbia	October 17, 1991	Referendum	A. Should voters be given the right, by legislation, to vote between elections for the removal of their member of the Legislative Assembly?	80.9	19.1	74.6
			B. Should voters be given the right, by legislation, to propose questions that the government of British Columbia must submit to the voters by referendum?	83.0	17.0	74.6
Yukon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Northwest Territories	May 4, 1992	Plebiscite	On April 14, 1982, a majority of voters in an NWT-wide plebiscite voted to support the division of the Northwest Territories so as to allow the creation of a new Nunavut Territory with its own Nunavut government. The NWT Legislative Assembly and the Government of Canada accepted this result. In the Iqaluit Agreement of January 15, 1987, the Nunavut Constitutional Forum (NCF) and the Western Constitutional Forum (WCF) agreed that the boundary for division for the NWT would be the boundary separating the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) land claim settlement area from the Inuvialuit and Dene-Metis land claim settlement areas. On April 19, 1991, the Government of Canada endorsed the compromise boundary shown on the map below (map was reproduced on the ballot paper). Division will occur in such a way as: • to maintain adequate levels of public services; • to respect the opportunity of residents in the Mackenzie Valley and Beaufort areas to develop new constitutional arrangements in the future for the western part of the NWT; • to respect the employment status and location preferences of GNWT employees. ON THESE UNDERSTANDINGS, DO YOU SUPPORT THE BOUNDARY FOR DIVISION SHOWN ON THE MAP ABOVE?	54.0	46.0	56.1
Nunavut	May 26, 1997	Public vote[2]	Should the first Nunavut Legislative Assembly have equal numbers of men and women MLAs, with one man and one woman elected to represent each electoral district?	43.0	57.0	39.0

[1] Only grain producers were entitled to register to vote.

[2] Since no legislation existed for the conduct of a plebiscite in only a part of the Northwest Territories, a public vote was conducted under special rules established by the government of the Northwest Territories and the government of Canada.

N/A – data not available

50 percent of electors vote one way on a given question. However, the results of a referendum called under either the British Columbia or Alberta *Election Act* are not binding. In Saskatchewan, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may choose at the time of proclamation whether or not the referendum results will be binding on the government. Where it is determined that the outcome will be binding, the government must adopt the results if more than 60 percent of ballots cast vote the same way, and if at least 50 percent of electors who are entitled to vote actually cast a ballot. It should be noted that when the results of a referendum held anywhere in Canada are deemed to be binding, they are only binding on the government that initiated the referendum.

Quebec is the only jurisdiction in Canada that provides for the establishment of a Conseil du référendum, which must hear any judicial proceeding relating to a referendum. The Conseil is composed of three judges of the court of Quebec, with the chief judge designated as the chair. Only the President or a member of the National Assembly may apply to the Conseil to render a decision. The Conseil, after receiving such an application, must submit its decision within ten days.

Photo: Elections Canada

The bilingual ballot for the 1992 federal referendum, with the question Canadians were asked to support or oppose. The question was approved by the House of Commons and Senate and the vote was held on October 26. The province of Quebec held its own referendum, under provincial law, using the same question and voting day.

Referendum committees

Only in Quebec and at the federal level are there legislative provisions concerning referendum committees. In Quebec, these are known as National Committees.

Federally, any group or individual may incur referendum expenses and advertise, directly and during a referendum period, for or against a referendum question. However, no person or group, other than a registered referendum committee, may incur referendum expenses that exceed $5 000. A person or group may apply for registration with the Chief Electoral Officer as a referendum committee at any time during the referendum period. The application must set out the name and address of the leader and officers of the committee, as well as the name the committee chooses for itself. A committee cannot be registered if the name or logo so closely resembles the name or logo of a previously registered committee that it may cause confusion. Federal referendum committees remain registered only for the duration of the referendum. During the 1992 federal referendum, the Chief Electoral Officer registered a total of 241 referendum committees.

In Quebec, National Committees are made up of members of the National Assembly who register, within five days after the adoption
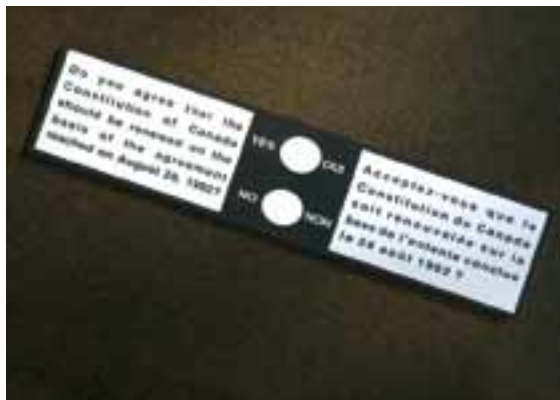
of a referendum question, with the Chief Electoral Officer in favour of one of the options. Unlike the federal legislation, the Quebec *Referendum Act* limits the number of committees to one for each option: one for and one against. All members of the National Assembly who register with the Chief Electoral Officer for one of the options must form the provisional committee in favour of that option. If no members come forward to register, the Chief Electoral Officer may invite between three and twenty electors to form the committee.

Each National Committee in Quebec must determine its own operating rules and by-laws at a meeting called by the Chief Electoral Officer. These by-laws will govern many aspects of the committee, including the name under which the committee will operate, the establishment of local authorities, and the manner in which the committee and affiliate groups will conduct and coordinate their operations and financing.

Registered referendum committees at the federal level are subject to expenses limits. The expenses limit is calculated by multiplying: *(a)* the product obtained by multiplying 30¢ by the fraction published by the Chief Electoral Officer in the *Canada Gazette* pursuant to section 414 of the new *Canada Elections Act*; and *(b)* the number of names on the preliminary voters lists for all the electoral districts in which the committee indicated it would be active. In the 1992 federal referendum, the average expenses limit for each referendum committee on the "yes" side was roughly $1.1 million, while for the "no" side it was nearly $4.1 million.

The National Committees of Quebec are also subject to expenses limits. National Committees must not spend more than $1.00 per elector on the preliminary or revised voters lists, whichever is greater, for all electoral districts. Quebec provides for a special referendum fund, out of which all expenses must be paid. The fund can only consist of direct contributions from electors, amounts transferred by political parties (the total sum of which may not exceed 50¢ per elector), and a special subsidy established by the National Assembly. While the federal *Referendum Act* defines referendum expenses as only those expenses used to directly support or oppose a referendum question, Quebec defines referendum expenses to include those spent to directly or indirectly support or oppose one of the options. In the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum, both the committees for the "yes" and for the "no" side were limited to referendum expenses of $5.1 million.

Federal referendum committees are subject to reporting requirements, which are similar to those imposed on candidates and registered political parties during an election. For example, candidates and parties in a federal election, and registered committees in a federal referendum, must all submit audited reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. The reports must list contributions received, by class of contributor, and the name of each contributor who donated more than $250 (that total is $200 in the case of an election). There is also a prohibition on foreign contributions, similar to the prohibition on foreign contributions to political parties and candidates during an election.

National Committees in Quebec are also required to disclose their contributions and expenditures. National Committees must submit a return of the expenses incurred by the committee, and the name and complete address of each elector who donated more than $200 to the committee. Only electors may make contributions, and the total amount of contributions to each National Committee by the same elector in the same referendum must not exceed $3 000.

The allocation of free broadcasting time is only regulated at the federal level. Two basic principles underlie federal allocation: it must be fair to all registered committees that requested broadcasting time and it must not be contrary to the public interest. Every network operator that meets criteria defined in the Act must provide a total of three hours. Each side of the referendum question (i.e. the "yes" side and the "no" side) is then allocated one and a half hours of free broadcasting time, to be divided among all registered committees. To be considered for allocation, a committee must have indicated it would like to receive free broadcasting time, registered for application before the 27th day before polling day, indicated on which network it wishes to broadcast and whether it supports or opposes the question, and paid a deposit of $500. In deciding which committees will get time and how much, the Arbitrator must consider whether the committee represents national interests, whether the proposed broadcasting messages would be directly related to the question at hand, and whether fair time is being granted equitably to both the opposing and promoting sides of the question.

Federal referendum legislation also provides for a blackout period on all referendum advertising, including polling day and the day immediately before polling day. Similarly, the Quebec referendum regulations prohibit referendum advertising in the seven days following the issuance of the order for a referendum, and also on polling day.

> … referendums have allowed Canadian electors to express their views on significant policy issues of the day.

While most Canadians think that referendums should be conducted regularly or occasionally, they have rarely been used in Canada. Referendums are generally proclaimed by the government and the results are usually not legally binding. However, referendums have allowed Canadian electors to express their views on significant policy issues of the day.

For a more detailed comparison of each jurisdiction's referendum legislation, as well as electoral legislation, please consult the *Compendium of Election Administration in Canada*, produced by Elections Canada, on Elections Canada's Web site at www.elections.ca. ✖

ENDNOTES

1. David Macdonald, "Referendums and Federal General Elections in Canada," Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (1991), vol. 10, p. 301.

2. As indicated by Butler and Ranney (in Boyer, 1992) the terms "referendum" and "plebiscite," while originally possessing two separate definitions, have been used interchangeably in contemporary language so much as to render the same definition to both terms. In this article, only the term "referendum" will be used, although the legislation may indicate "plebiscite."

3. This study was conducted following the 1997 federal general election. Elections Canada participated in the study, and asked the following question on a mail-back questionnaire: "Do you think that referendums on important questions should be held regularly, occasionally, rarely or never?" The results were: regularly – 30 percent; occasionally – 43.4 percent; rarely – 20.1 percent; never – 2.7 percent; not sure – 3.8 percent.

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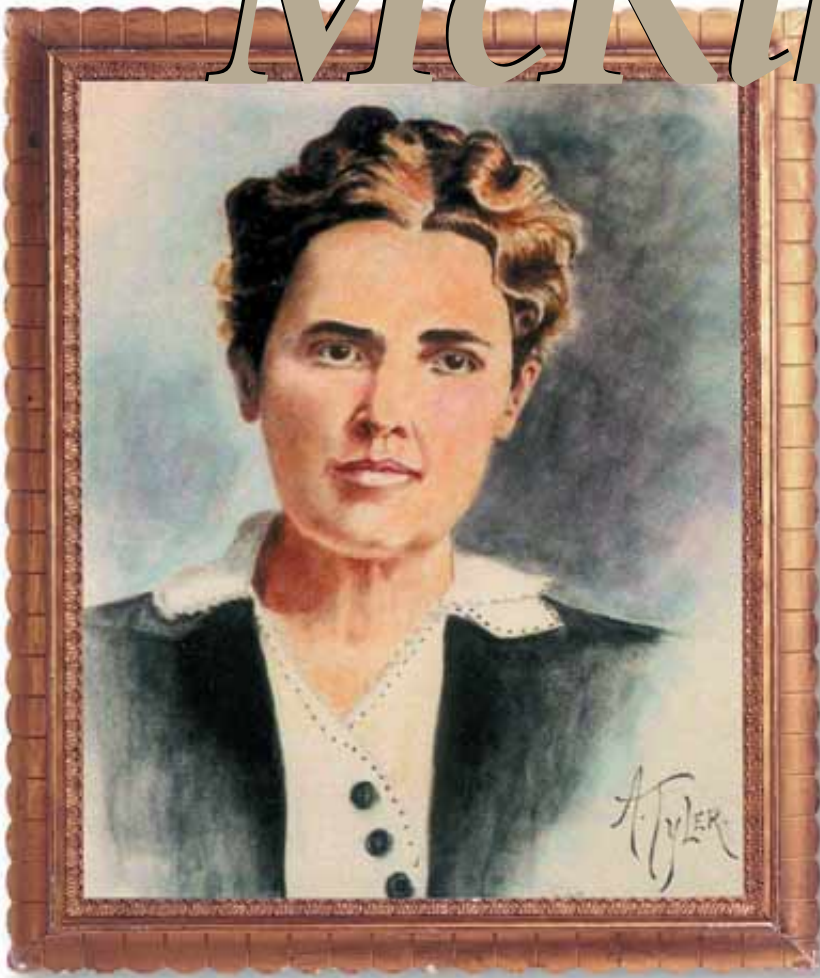
Louise McKinney

This portrait of Louise McKinney currently hangs, with paintings of the other Famous Five members, on the 5th floor of the Alberta legislature in Edmonton. They are on loan by Edmonton artist Alice Tyler, A.F.A., P.S.C., for viewing by legislators and the visiting public.

The First Woman Elected to a Legislature in the British Empire

WAYNE BROWN
CO-EDITOR, ELECTORAL INSIGHT, ELECTIONS CANADA

F our years before any woman would win a seat in Canada's Parliament, Louise Crummy McKinney was elected to the provincial legislature of Alberta. With her 1917 victory, she became the first woman to take her seat in a legislature in the entire British Empire.

Barely a year earlier, Canada's provinces had begun to recognize the right of women to vote and run for office at the provincial level. Alberta was actually the third province to do so, in the spring of 1916, on the heels of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. McKinney became a member of the Alberta legislature the year before the right to vote in federal elections was extended to Canadian women at least 21 years of age, and two years before they would become eligible for election to the House of Commons. (Agnes Macphail from Ontario was the first woman elected at the federal level in 1921.)

While McKinney made history on her own, it is likely that she is actually more widely recognized as a member of the Famous Five. This was the group of five Alberta women who went all the way to the Privy Council in Britain to establish the right of women to be recognized as persons and, therefore, eligible to be appointed as senators. But McKinney's life included other remarkable achievements. She was a "homesteader" south of Calgary, a temperance advocate and the driving force behind a 1915 Alberta vote to prohibit alcohol, and the only Western Canadian woman to sign the Basis of Union, which brought three denominations together as the United Church of Canada.

McKinney was born Louise Crummy on September 22, 1868, in the tiny community of Frankville, Ontario, southwest of Ottawa. Of Irish descent, she was the second daughter in a strict Methodist family of ten children. While still a schoolgirl, she joined one of the Women's Christian Temperance Union's youth programs where the pledge recited at every meeting was, "I will never falter until this land is freed from the bonds of the distiller, brewer and government company."[1] She wouldn't have known it at that time, but Louise would spend much of her life attempting to fulfill that pledge.

Author Grant MacEwan, in *Mighty Women*, describes Louise as "a bright girl, fun loving and popular. With a good Irish sense of humour and unusual talent in debate, qualities of leadership showed clearly." She was educated in Ontario, at Athens High School and Smiths Falls Model School, and apparently hoped to become a doctor. But in the 1880s, women were not accepted in medical school. Instead, she finished the Ottawa Normal School and taught public school in the Frankville area for several years.

In 1893, Louise travelled to North Dakota to visit a married sister. There, at the age of 26, after three years as a teacher, she became an organizer for the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In North Dakota, she met the man who would become her husband, James McKinney. He was also of Irish descent and from a small community near Ottawa, and shared her interests in people, church and prohibition. In 1896, they made the trip all the way back to Frankville so they could be married in her family's home. Then they returned to a farm in North Dakota where their son, Willard, was born. While living there, Louise travelled with other WCTU organizers to create new chapters of the organization. However, both Louise and James wanted to return to Canada and, in 1903, they joined the large movement of settlers from the Western states northward to the millions of acres of better farming

… she became an organizer for the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

land in southern Alberta, which was then still part of the Northwest Territories. (Alberta and Saskatchewan would become provinces of the Dominion of Canada in 1905.)

The McKinneys found their new homestead on a quarter section near Claresholm, south of Calgary. While James soon began building the first Methodist Church at Claresholm, Louise set up a temperance local, of which she was the first president, retaining the office for more than 25 years. But she wasn't satisfied with that. Such was her zeal to outlaw liquor that, in less than a decade, through constant travelling and letter writing, she established more than 40 WCTU chapters in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As well, she became the president of the national WCTU and a vice-president of the international organization.

MacEwan writes, "During her years in office, every westerner became aware of the organization of women workers. In her presidential capacity, she travelled extensively to keep speaking engagements, winter and summer. She personally directed most of the work of organizing and it reached the point where the mere mention of the name of Louise McKinney suggested WCTU, and vice versa."[2]

The WCTU believed that all men and women should abstain completely from alcohol and called for the prohibition of its manufacture, sale and use. It also urged the government to prohibit the sale, manufacture and importation of cigarettes. McKinney passionately preached the evils of alcohol wherever she went. The book, *The Clear Spirit; Twenty Canadian Women and Their Times*, published in 1973, states, "It is a little hard to present with full sympathy the devotion of women such as Mrs. McKinney to the temperance cause, since it includes a degree of what seems to be fanaticism – such as her efforts to prevent the sending of cigarettes and tobacco to the men in the trenches in World War I. (What a pity it is that so many of those earnest souls who campaigned against the evils of tobacco are not here to read the current medical literature on the subject!)."[3]

The WCTU scored its biggest victory in 1915 when Albertans, in a province-wide plebiscite, voted for prohibition. It was the male population who made that choice, because it would be another year before Alberta women would obtain the right to vote at the provincial level.

Louise McKinney and the WCTU played a lengthy and important role in obtaining the right to vote for Alberta women in 1916. It was also the first opportunity for women to be candidates for legislative office. McKinney had an interest in politics, but when she decided to run as a candidate in Alberta's 1917 provincial election, she seems to have done so largely to further the ideals closest to her

heart: liquor control (because prohibition had never really been enforced) and women's rights.

McKinney was disgusted to learn that the major parties were receiving campaign contributions from the liquor companies; so disgusted, that she secured the nomination of the Non-Partisan League (an agrarian movement) in the Claresholm constituency and won election as an Independent on a prohibition platform. In fact, two women were elected in that provincial election, the other being Lt. Roberta McAdams, who was elected by the armed forces overseas. (The Alberta legislature passed a bill in 1917 providing for the overseas election of two military representatives to the legislature.) But Lt. McAdams, who was still serving overseas as a nurse, was not in the legislature on the day it opened. So McKinney obtained the distinction of being the first woman to be sworn in and to take a seat in any legislature in the British Empire.

In her maiden speech to the legislature, McKinney focused on Canada's responsibility to the returned servicemen, urging help for them so they might establish homesteads in areas with schools and transportation. A strong debater, legislator McKinney fought for stricter liquor control laws and other measures to assist immigrants, widows and separated women. She introduced a motion that led to the *Dower Act*, ensuring that a certain proportion of a deceased husband's property went to his widow. As well, in common with James Weir, the other Non-Partisan League member in the legislature, McKinney urged that the Dominion government take over all the coalfields in Alberta that had operating mines, and develop their unworked seams.

As McKinney herself wrote for the *Woman's Century*, for the first time there was an Independent section in the legislature comprised of two soldiers' representatives, two farmers' representatives and one labour representative, and that group included both of the women members. "In the office where we were sworn in and signed the roll, the men welcomed us and made us feel that they were honoured in being members of the legislative body that was thus making

Photo: Wayne Brown

Part of the display about the Famous Five in the Senate foyer in July 2000 featured Louise McKinney and the group's leader, Judge Emily Murphy.

history ... in all the days that followed we were accepted as a matter of fact and as though we had a perfect right to be there, and one almost forgot that there was anything new in the situation."[4]

McKinney served only one four-year term in the Alberta legislature. She had played a prominent role in the organization of the United Farmers of Alberta (U.F.A.), which absorbed the Non-Partisan League. But she did not agree with the U.F.A.'s president, Henry Wise Wood, on the role the organization should play in politics. In the election of 1921, McKinney ran as an independent, and was defeated by only forty-six votes when a U.F.A. sweep to power claimed her seat as well. Her rigid non-drinking and non-smoking platform appears to have cost her some votes, especially among the servicemen who had returned from overseas.

McKinney seems not to have been overly disappointed with her loss and never ran again. Instead, she concentrated on her church and temperance work. Then came an even bigger defeat. Another liquor vote in Alberta, in 1923, repealed prohibition. That vote is described by author Nancy Millar in her book *The Famous Five*. "It was a stunning blow for Louise McKinney and the WCTU, not the least because women had the vote this time around and used it to Bring Back the Bottle. How could they? The vote was supposed to be used to build a Good Decent World. It wasn't supposed to be used for booze."

McKinney was also devoted to another issue in the early 1920s. Should a new church be formed from a union of Methodist, Congregationalist and some Presbyterian churches? Louise was in favour, and she subsequently became one of only four women in Canada (and the only woman from Western Canada) who signed the Basis of Union that created the United Church of Canada in 1925.

In 1927, ten years after McKinney's election, another and even more historic event began: the "Persons Case." The traditional interpretation of the *British North America Act of 1867*, which set out the powers and responsibilities of the provincial and federal governments, was that only a man could be a "person" and only qualified
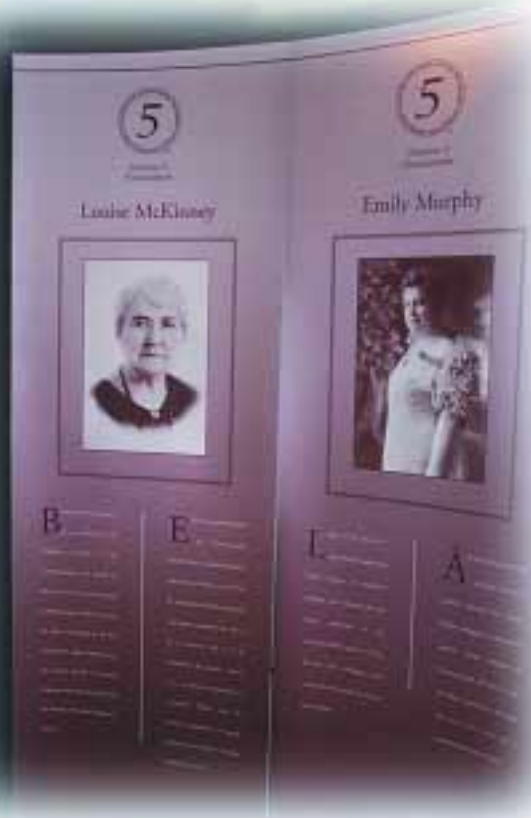
Maquette by artist Barbara Paterson for a monument celebrating the Famous Five and the "Persons Case." The maquette, which portrays Louise McKinney (sitting on the left), has been displayed at the provincial legislatures and in the foyer of Canada's Senate in Ottawa. The inset shows the bronze statue of McKinney at one of the final stages in the production of the monument. (Photos provided by the Famous 5 Foundation.)

"persons" could be appointed to the Canadian Senate. Judge Emily Murphy, an Edmonton women's court magistrate, was appalled to realize that women were not fully defined as persons in the BNA Act.

Emily Murphy turned to four other Alberta women for support. McKinney was the second woman asked to sign Murphy's petition for personhood. The others, who would make up the Famous Five, included Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Nellie McClung. (For more on McClung, see the June 1999 edition of *Electoral Insight*.)

Together, they appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, but lost. Undaunted, they persuaded Prime Minister Mackenzie King to appeal the case to Canada's highest court in those days, Britain's Privy Council. Thus it was that on October 18, 1929, from a London courtroom came the landmark decision that Canadian women were indeed "persons," eligible for appointment to the Senate and participation in the final stages of enacting federal laws in Canada.

During 25 years as a senior officer of the WCTU in Canada and its world body, McKinney attended many international conferences of the organization, in such locales as Boston, Brooklyn, London, and Lausanne. In 1931, she presided over a national meeting in Toronto, where she was named first vice president of the WCTU. However, she became ill and, a few days after returning to Claresholm, died at her home. The many tributes from friends and co-workers praised her judgment, humour and perseverance. "Some 100 WCTU members

from all over Canada sat in a block in the church. As they filed past the grave later, each dropped a small white ribbon onto the casket, the white ribbon being the WCTU symbol of purity and faith."[5]

Louise McKinney was 63 years of age at her death, on July 10, 1931. She was laid to rest in Claresholm, Alberta. ✖

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2. MacEwan, Grant, "Louise Crummy McKinney: Death on Booze," *Mighty Women, Stories of Western Canadian Pioneers.* Vancouver/Toronto: Greystone,1995, pp. 138-145.

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Electoral News in Brief

2000 FEDERAL GENERAL ELECTION

Canada's 37th federal general election concluded on Monday, November 27, 2000, as electors went to the polls in 301 electoral districts to choose their members of Parliament from among 1 808 candidates. More than 57 000 polling stations served cities, towns and villages across a country spanning six time zones. Approximately 20.8 million citizens were registered on the final voters lists and eligible to participate in the election, an increase from the 19.6 million registered at the previous general election in 1997. Approximately 12.7 million Canadians cast ballots, with most doing so on election day, 36 days after the writs were issued on October 22. More than 750 000 Canadians cast ballots at the advance polls on November 17, 18 and 20.

Eleven officially registered political parties took part in the general election. Five of them won seats in the House of Commons, with the Liberal Party of Canada, led by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, returned as the government with approximately 41 percent of the national popular vote. The Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance won 25 percent of the national vote and retained its status as the Official Opposition. Following several judicial recounts in districts with close results, the final elected standings were: Liberal Party of Canada 172 seats, Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance 66, Bloc Québécois 38, New Democratic Party 13, and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada 12. No candidates for any of the other six parties were elected, nor were any independent candidates or those with no affiliation.

The five party leaders with seats in the previous Parliament were personally re-elected. There were 1 808 candidates in the November election, with an average of 6 per electoral district. The total number was 136 more than at the previous election, but less than the 2 155 who contested the 1993 election. There were 375 women candidates, which was slightly less than 21 percent of the total and a decrease of almost 4 percent from the 1997 election.

For the November 2000 election, third parties were required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer and were subject to spending limits on their election advertising. Those requirements, part of Bill C-2, which took effect on September 1, 2000, applied to a person or group other than a candidate, registered political party or a local association of a registered political party. There were 47 registered third parties. Early in the election period, the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta granted an injunction against the limits, but it was suspended on November 10 by the Supreme Court of Canada. Third parties are required to report the details of their election advertising expenses within four months after election day.

Some 550 tonnes of election materials, including ballot boxes, forms, training manuals, and signs, were used in the election. More than 3 000 computers equipped the local offices of the returning officers. Returning officers employed approximately 150 000 election officers across Canada, including deputy returning officers, poll clerks, special ballot coordinators, revising agents, and others.

VOTER INFORMATION PROGRAM FOR THE 37TH GENERAL ELECTION

An extensive and fully integrated voter information program was activated for the recent federal general election. To ensure that all electors were aware of their right to vote, the need to have their names on the voters lists, and the methods available to cast their ballots, Elections Canada advertised widely on television, radio and in print. The timing and content of

Photo: Wayne Brown

Electoral geography technician Philippe Palmer examines one of the 90 000 electoral maps that Elections Canada prepared for use at the recent federal general election.

those ads were synchronized with the key phases of the electoral calendar. Elections Canada also expanded the extensive information already available on its Web site. During the 36-day election period, the Web site (www.elections.ca) provided registration and voting information, a youth module, the electoral calendar, maps, and a profile of each of the 301 electoral districts, news releases and background information about the electoral system. Banner ads on major Internet portals generated significant traffic to the Elections Canada site. In the area of public enquiries, Elections Canada significantly increased the number of officers answering questions received by telephone, fax and e-mail.

Early in the 36-day election period, a bilingual (English/French) pamphlet was delivered to approximately 12 million households across Canada. A bilingual (Inuinnaqtun/Inuktitut) version was sent to all households in Nunavut. The pamphlet was also made available in three other Aboriginal languages and 26 ethnocultural languages. More than 75 000 copies of the pamphlet were ordered.

All registered electors were mailed voter information cards that advised them where and when they could cast their ballots. Almost 2 500 information kits about the electoral process were distributed to national and local associations representing young and other first-time voters, Aboriginal Canadians, ethnocultural communities, and persons with disabilities. Special brochures and advertisements in newspapers in the United States targeted those residing away from Canada who might wish to vote by special ballot.

The information provided by Elections Canada reminded Canadians that the voters lists are based on the data in the permanent National Register of Electors, and that a door-to-door enumeration is no longer carried out during federal elections. Therefore, a key message was that electors needed to verify that they were on the voters lists, and if not, to take the appropriate action. Another key message was the availability of voting by special ballot for those who do not wish to go to their regular or advance polling stations, including those who are disabled, hospitalized or away from home attending school, and those who are temporarily living away from Canada or travelling on vacation or business.

On election night itself, after the polls closed, the Elections Canada Web site posted preliminary election results, rapidly updated as the polls reported in, and with an unprecedented level of detail.

Users could personally customize their results windows to view and analyze the results for selected electoral districts or overall results, by registered party, for a large city, a province or territory, or the entire country. Over the 36-day election period, the total number of visitors to the Elections Canada Web site was ten times greater than during the previous election in 1997.

To help the media report on the election, a comprehensive *Media Guide* and a CD-ROM were produced, offering information on electoral legislation, registration and voting, and past elections. A network of regional media representatives was in place to support Elections Canada's media relations program.

In September, Elections Canada also placed advertisements in 112 daily newspapers, including eight ethnocultural newspapers, to inform the public about the new *Canada Elections Act*, resulting from the passage by Parliament of Bill C-2, which came into force on September 1, 2000. Among the provisions of the new Act are the regulation of third party election advertising, more rigorous financial reporting by registered parties and candidates, and new rules for the publication and broadcasting of election advertising and new opinion surveys.

GIANT TRAINING EVENT AT ELECTIONS CANADA

The biggest training program ever held at Elections Canada took place last summer in Ottawa, as part of the agency's plan to ensure event-readiness by September 1, 2000. The project brought together 301 returning officers (ROs), 301 assistant returning officers (AROs) and 301 automation coordinators (ACs) with 25 trainers/presenters from nine different divisions at Elections Canada.

The staff of the Training and Evaluation Division of Elections Canada's Operations Directorate, ably aided by an outside contractor, Prime Strategies Inc., arranged for the ROs, AROs and ACs to receive nearly 25 000 hours of training between July 31st and August 26, 2000. The ROs and AROs each received three days of training, while the ACs received five days.

Adding to the logistical challenge, the participants came from every electoral district in Canada, necessitating travel reservations and the booking of more than 5 500 bed-nights – the most for one night being 235 rooms. For the training sessions, a series of rooms were booked in two different hotels. Besides the sound and audio-visual systems needed in each room, eight complete computer networks, comprising not less than 80 workstations, 8 servers and 8 printers, had to be installed and linked to Elections Canada. Ottawa's Crowne Plaza and Delta hotels provided sterling service throughout this very intense period.

Photo: Elections Canada

Many returning officers who were in Ottawa for training also attended the August 9, 2000, anniversary event at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec. Sitting with Elections Canada and museum officials (front row) was Don Boudria, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (centre).

Recent legislative changes (Bill C-2) and their impact on event administration formed the primary subject matter of the training sessions, together with newly developed systems for field elector registration and field financial management and revised systems for event management and results reporting. Also covered were a new organizational structure for the offices of returning officers, the revised tariff of fees, and a new performance assessment process for returning officers.

Photo: Elections Canada

Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley presents Museum of Civilization President Dr. Victor Rabinovitch (left) with a copy of the Elections Canada CD-ROM, Explore A History of the Vote in Canada, at the 80th anniversary celebration at the museum.

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF OFFICE OF CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. In 1920, Parliament adopted the *Dominion Elections Act,* which marked the beginning of the modern era of electoral administration in Canada.

On August 9, 2000, the anniversary and our electoral system were at the centre of an event at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec. Hosted by Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley and the museum's President, Dr. Victor Rabinovitch, it was attended by the Honourable Don Boudria, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Senator Gérald Beaudoin and more than 300 guests. "The creation of the office of Chief Electoral Officer in 1920 was a giant step forward," stated Mr. Boudria. "Before that, electoral administration was the government's responsibility, which meant the party in power had the opportunity, and the temptation, to favour its own candidates. In 1920, Parliament turned over a new page forever."

Since the 1920 creation of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, the number of seats in the House of Commons has increased from 235 to the current 301. Meanwhile, the number of Canadian electors has grown to more than 20 million from 4.4 million (at the December 1921 general election). Mr. Kingsley became Chief Electoral Officer in February 1990 and is the fifth person to hold that post.

Two new information products were unveiled at the August 9 event: the third phase of the Web module, *Explore A History of the Vote in Canada*, and the French version of the ACE (Administration and Cost of Elections) Project. The third phase of the Web module is entitled "Chronicle" and examines the evolution of Canada's electoral system from 1920 to 1997. Its content includes *SElections*, Elections Canada's new electronic trivia game. "*Explore A History of the Vote in Canada* is an excellent example of how the computer can serve democracy," stated

Mr. Boudria. "The launch of the third phase is well-timed, since with the adoption of Bill C-2, we have just implemented the greatest electoral reform in Canada in 30 years."

The ACE Project, a comprehensive reference work on the management of elections, is available on CD-ROM and the Internet (www.aceproject.org) and includes about 5 000 Web pages of electoral information. "The primary goal of the ACE Project is to promote democratic development in countries that do not necessarily have a long tradition of democracy," explained Mr. Kingsley. "It certainly represents a valuable investment, particularly in terms of the potential spin-offs in the spread of democracy."

TWO FEDERAL BY-ELECTIONS

By-elections were held in two electoral districts on September 11, 2000, the results giving seats in the House of Commons to the leaders of two federal political parties. Both seats were retained by the parties that previously held them.

In the British Columbia riding of Okanagan–Coquihalla, the leader of the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance, Stockwell Day, received 70 percent of the vote in defeating seven other candidates. In the Nova Scotia riding of Kings–Hants, Progressive Conservative Party of Canada leader Joe Clark obtained more than 53 percent of the vote while defeating four other candidates.

The number of registered electors and the voter turnout were quite similar in the two electoral districts. There were more than 67 000 registered electors in each electoral district and slightly over 40 percent cast their ballots.

SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS TO MEXICO'S 2000 ELECTION

Elections Canada played a major role last year in implementing a United Nations program to host visits by electoral officials from around the world during Mexico's presidential elections. Assistant Director of International Services France Demianenko oversaw the coordination and support for the more than 50 international visitors. Their presence during the period of June 28 to July 4 lent credibility to Mexico's electoral process, and this was widely regarded as the most democratic election that country has ever experienced. After 71 years of rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the Mexicans chose opposition leader Vicente Fox, the candidate of the National Action Party, to be their next President.

The main purpose of the United Nations program was to enable the foreign officials to visit polling stations and witness the election process. The visits were organized by the UN in a manner that promoted the professionalism, credibility and independent status of the special guests. Following an orientation program that concluded on July 1, the guests visited numerous polling stations and then returned to the Federal District of Mexico to review their findings and present them to Mexico's electoral authority, the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE) and the media. All of this occurred under UN coordination.

In March 1999, the Mexican government and the United Nations had signed an electoral assistance agreement, which called for an information and coordination program for the international visitors that would reinforce and complement the support they would receive from Mexico's federal electoral authorities. In December 1999, the Instituto Federal Electoral General Council issued a notice stating it would welcome officials from "bodies endowed with

electoral authority from other countries." IFE and the Tribunal Electoral prepared the orientation and seminar program for them.

To obtain the widest possible understanding of Mexico's electoral process, the international guests visited areas that demonstrated the key dynamics affecting the electoral process. They went to urban and rural regions (about 70 percent and 30 percent respectively); areas of differing geography (mountains, hills, plains); areas with the highest and most concentrated voter population; and regions with politically sensitive and vigorously contested seats.

The democratization process in Mexico began a number of years ago, concurrently with a profound social transformation. Thanks to a series of electoral reforms, Mexican citizens have been able to decide for themselves who will lead their government, rather than having it decided by the internal mechanisms of a single party or coalition.

NUNAVUT

Members of the Standing Committee *Ajauqtiit* of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly visited Elections Canada in Ottawa in June 2000 to discuss issues regarding the administration of elections, as part of their study on electoral reform. This visit also provided the opportunity for Elections Canada to learn more about particular challenges in administering elections in the North. The discussions focused on the National Register of Electors, a central election office, electoral finance, new election administration technology, the training of election officers, electoral geography and the rules for voting by special ballot. The goal was to ensure that the Nunavut *Elections Act* meets the needs of voters in the new territory.

The Standing Committee was accompanied by representatives of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, who wish to work with it (as they are already legislated to do with the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories) on a host of issues critical to the development of Nunavut.

For many years, Elections Canada was responsible for administering the territorial elections in the Northwest Territories. In 1997, the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories completed an agreement granting territorial officials full responsibility for future territorial elections. Nunavut's historic, first general election in February 1999, which was administered by the Chief Electoral Officer of the Northwest Territories, elected nineteen members of the Legislature, who began governing two months later when the Northwest Territories was divided into Nunavut and the remaining western portion.

The committee's mandate includes reviewing the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of the Northwest Territories, entitled *Election of the First Legislative Assembly of Nunavut — 1999: A New Beginning*, and preparing a report that will recommend improvements to the Nunavut *Elections Act*. "The challenges facing elections staff at all levels in Nunavut include the preparation of materials in Inuktitut, voting maps for our communities, which do not usually have street names, and enabling electors in outpost camps to vote," said Committee chairman Hunter Tootoo.

The Standing Committee has held public hearings and, last April, issued an interim report outlining some of the issues that have been raised. In September, it visited a number of territorial communities to hold further hearings in advance of issuing its final report. More information is available from the Web site of Nunavut's Legislative Assembly (www.assembly.nu.ca). ✐✗

Electoral Facts

W A Y N E   B R O W N, *ELECTIONS CANADA*

Participation in a general election or referendum involves electors, candidates, political parties and election officers. The numbers below, many of which have grown dramatically during Canada's history, illustrate the magnitude of that participation.

Number of electors

There were 361 000 electors at Canada's first general election in 1867, compared to approximately 20 million at recent general elections. Meanwhile, the country's population has grown from 3.2 million at Confederation to over 30 million today.

Percentage of electors in population

The names of only about 11 percent of the population were on the lists of electors in 1867. At general elections in recent decades, the number has averaged almost 70 percent. The increase in those with the right to vote is largely due to the removal of property qualifications, the extension of the right to vote to women in 1918, and the lowering of the voting age in 1970.

Voter turnout

An average of 71 percent of registered electors cast ballots at the 40 federal general elections and referendums held from Confederation to 2000. Post-war turnout from 1945 through the 1980s averaged about 75 percent, without major fluctuations from event to event. More recently, the participation rates among registered electors have fallen to 67 percent in 1997 and to a slightly lower level again in 2000.

Highest voter turnout

The highest percentage of electors to cast ballots at a federal election was 79.4 percent in March 1958, when the Progressive Conservative Government of John Diefenbaker went from minority to majority status in the House of Commons. Next in line came the succeeding general elections of 1962 and 1963, during a minority government period, when the voter turnout was 79.0 and 79.2 percent respectively.

Lowest voter turnout

The percentage of electors who cast ballots at the 2000 federal general election was slightly below the level of 62.9 percent in June 1896, when Sir Wilfrid Laurier was elected Liberal Prime Minister.

Young electors

At the 1997 general election, electors aged 25 years or less were 11 percent less likely to vote than those in older age groups. (From the 1997 Canadian Election Study.)

Photo: Duncan Cameron, Ottawa, NA, DAP, 1970-15, file 6785A, item 7, negative no. PA-169756

This polling station used in the June 1957 federal election appears to have been located in a kitchen. Since the 1980s, greater recognition of the need for level access has led to locating most polling places in community centres and schools.

By-election turnout

Voter participation in federal by-elections is almost always lower than in general elections. During the 1980s, the average by-election turnout was approximately 60 percent, while in the 1990s it declined to about 44 percent.

Referendum turnout

The voter turnout at the two most recent federal referendums was quite similar. In October 1992, 71.8 percent of electors cast ballots on a proposal to amend the Constitution, while 71.3 percent voted at the April 1942 referendum on a question related to military conscription. At Canada's only other national referendum, which sought Canadians' views about liquor sale prohibition in September 1898, the voter turnout was 44.6 percent.

Other countries

How does Canada's voter turnout compare to those in some other countries? In the United States, less than 52 percent of the voting age population cast ballots in the 2000 presidential election, and 36 percent did so for legislative elections in 1998. Russia's presidential election turnout in March 2000 was 69 percent. Among countries with compulsory voting, the participation at their most recent elections was 96 percent in Australia, 91 percent in Belgium and 79 percent in Brazil. (International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), U.S. Federal Election Commission.)

Number of political parties

From Confederation until the 1920s, only two parties (Liberals and Conservatives), and sometimes a small number of independent candidates, usually contested federal elections in Canada. This changed when regional groups, such as the Progressives and the United Farmers, ran candidates, followed by such parties as the Social Credit and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (which later became the New Democratic Party). Since 1970, political parties have had the choice, under the *Canada Elections Act*, to register with the Chief Electoral Officer.

Most political parties

The highest ever number of registered political parties to contest a Canadian election was 14, in 1993. There were 12 in 1988, 10 in 1997 and 11 in 2000.

Most candidates

The 1993 election also had a record number of candidates – 2 155. The increase of almost 600 from the previous election was partly the result of the record number of parties in 1993. There were 1 672 candidates in 1997 and 1 808 in 2000.

Female candidates

At the 1993 federal general election, more women than ever before ran for a seat in the House of Commons. There were 475, about 22 percent of all the candidates in that election. There were 408 female candidates in the 1997 election, 24.4 percent of the total number. In 2000, 375 women candidates made up 21 percent of the total.

Women elected

The largest number of women elected to the House of Commons was 62, in 1997 and again in 2000, which represents about 21 percent of the total membership of the Commons. The largest number of women previously elected was 53, in 1993.

Election personnel

When a general election or referendum is held, Elections Canada employs about 150 000 people in the 301 electoral districts across the country. This number includes returning officers, deputy returning officers, poll clerks, special ballot coordinators, registration officers and the Elections Canada staff in Ottawa.

Electoral information for you

It's all there, in one place, on our newly rebuilt Web site at

www.elections.ca

Elections Canada has recently revised the structure and increased the content of its Web site. Now it's on the leading edge of Internet-based electoral technology. Now it is an even more valuable and accessible resource for everyone interested in information about federal elections and referendums in Canada.

Please visit our Web site soon. See the latest results of our ongoing efforts to make information about the federal electoral system as widely available as possible. The site provides clearer access to the financial reports of political parties and candidates. Information on the results of past elections is more complete and easier to look up.

Other sections provide updated information about registering and voting, the new *Canada Elections Act*, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, and maps of the 301 electoral districts. There is a subscription service you can use to be notified by e-mail when new information is posted. There's also a new section to educate young people about the electoral process.

On the night of a federal election, by-election or referendum, the voting results appear after all the polls have closed.

Please visit the site soon, and bookmark it for future reference.