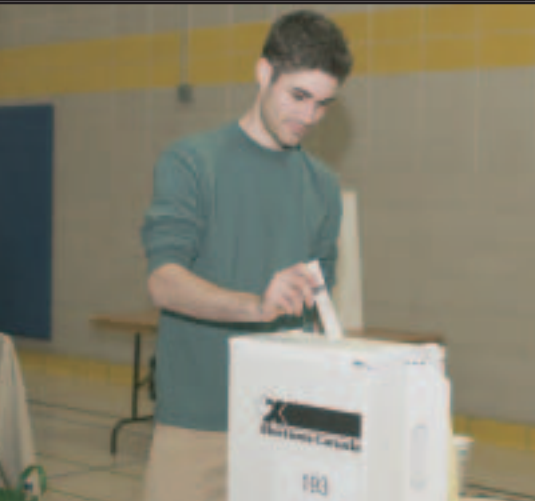


ELECTORAL Insight



2004 General Election



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Chief Electoral Officer's Message



Jean-Pierre Kingsley
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

The 2004 General Election

Canada's 38th general election was held on June 28, 2004. The election period began on May 23, following a period of significant legislative and political changes, including changes to the electoral boundaries, party registration requirements and political financing rules, as well as changes in the leadership of several political parties and the merger of two parties.

This special issue of *Electoral Insight* is devoted to the 2004 general election. The articles cover a broad range of issues, including youth electoral participation, the representation of women and Aboriginal people, both as candidates and as members of Parliament, and the impact of legislative provisions relating to public opinion polls and political party financing. In addition, three authors examine the possible effects of institutional changes that have been the focus of recent public debate, namely electoral system reform and fixed-date elections.

To provide a context for the articles in this issue, I am presenting here an overview of the conduct of the 38th general election. First, I review the legislative context of the election. Second, I describe Elections Canada's key initiatives. I conclude with a look at Elections Canada's post-election research and analysis as we prepare for Canada's 39th general election.

The context of the 2004 general election

The 38th general election took place in a complex and evolving legislative context. Foremost among the recent legislative changes was Bill C-24, *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing)*, which made far-reaching changes to the political finance regime. Among other provisions, the new legislation introduced limits on political contributions and a ban on contributions from unions and corporations to political parties and leadership contestants. Disclosure and registration requirements were extended to cover electoral district associations and nomination and leadership contestants. The legislation also established a publicly funded system of quarterly allowances for registered political parties, based on the number of votes they obtained in the previous general election. Bill C-24 came into force on January 1, 2004.

Another significant challenge was the 2003 Representation Order, which increased the number of electoral districts from 301 to 308. By law, Canada's federal electoral boundaries are adjusted every 10 years, following the Census, to reflect changes in the population. Bill C-5, *An Act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003*, set the effective date of the 2003 Representation Order at April 1, 2004.

In May 2004, Bill C-3, *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act*, changed the requirements for political party registration. The bill came in response to the June 2003 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Figuroa v. Canada (Attorney General)*, which declared that provisions of the Act requiring a registered party to nominate at least 50 candidates in a general election were unconstitutional. Under the new rules, political parties may be registered if they nominate at least one confirmed candidate and meet certain administrative requirements. There were 12 registered political parties in the 2004 election, one more than at the previous general election in 2000.

Elections Canada's main initiatives for the 2004 general election

Following the 37th general election in 2000, Elections Canada identified four priority areas for improvements: 1) the quality of the lists of electors; 2) the voter information cards sent to all registered electors; 3) communication with electors through the advertising campaign; and 4) responses to enquiries from the public. As my report on the 38th general election shows, our commitment to those improvements has been met.¹

Improvements to the National Register of Electors and the revision process

As a result of improvements to the Register, it is estimated that the preliminary lists of electors used during the 38th general election included more than 95% of electors, with 83% ($\pm 2\%$) listed at the correct address. This is a marked improvement over the 37th general election, when 89% of electors were on the lists, 79% at the correct address. These improvements result from several key initiatives.

First, we have continued to improve our ability to update the Register by making more effective use of existing data sources, as well as adding new ones, including driver's licence data in Alberta and Canada Post's National Change of Address files. Continued collaboration with electoral agencies in the provinces and territories has also contributed to list quality improvements.

We have also improved the Register's coverage, especially of youth, by adding electors from administrative data sources such as the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Since 2002, following changes to our agreement with the CRA, eligible tax filers who were not already in the Register could consent

on their income tax returns to be added to it. Elections Canada must still confirm the citizenship of these individuals before adding them to the Register. For this purpose, we mailed registration packages to more than 2.2 million potential electors in 2003; some 275,000 responded positively and were added to the Register, and another 80,000 wrote to inform us they were not citizens.

In February 2004, we wrote to some 1.1 million young Canadians who turned 18 after the 37th general election, to remind them of their right to vote and ensure they were registered to vote in the upcoming election. Once the election was called, we wrote to 250,000 young people who still had not registered to tell them how they could register during the revision period or at the polls.

Improving address and geographic information remains a priority. We can now pinpoint 87% of electors (up from 65% in 2000) on our digital maps using their residential address information, thus assigning them to the correct poll with greater confidence.

Changes made since 2000 to the computer system used for election registration (REVISE) greatly facilitated the revision process and improved the accuracy of the lists. In particular, the system now allows us to transfer the records of individuals who have moved to another electoral district, to avoid creating duplicate entries on the lists. It also enables us to send the latest electronic updates from the Register to returning officers; some 335,000 updates, including over 80,000 changes of address from Canada Post, current to mid-May, were transmitted to returning officers at the beginning of the election period.

We also improved targeted revision, in which revising agents go door-to-door to register voters in areas where a high percentage of electors may not have been included on the preliminary lists. We set up a central registry of high-mobility addresses and carried out a demographic analysis of Register coverage to identify areas with low registration rates. This information was provided to returning officers before the general election for addition to their lists of dwellings for targeted revision.

During this election, revising agents visited approximately 1,295,000 addresses and completed registration forms for some 266,000 households. When we compare this to the 2000 general election, when some 515,000 addresses were visited and registration forms were completed for some



Chief Electoral Officer of Canada Jean-Pierre Kingsley signs 308 writs, one for each electoral district, for the general election of June 28, 2004.



Revising agents conduct targeted revision in a new suburb.

192,000 households, it seems that, despite a greater effort, the effectiveness of door-to-door canvassing in eliciting registrations has declined. There are a number of reasons for this, among them a growing reluctance to open doors to strangers and increasing absences from home. In addition, revising agents cannot register people who are not at home, without identification. In light of this, we will continue to pursue new registration methods, such as on-line voter registration, which has considerable potential to improve service to the elector.

Maintaining the Register is, more than ever, a collaborative effort. Political parties and members of Parliament share responsibility with us for maintaining the accuracy of the National Register of Electors. Together, we will continue to improve the Register, with particular emphasis on ensuring that youth are registered, on geocoding improvements in rural areas, and on increasing the currency of the Register.

Voter information cards (VICs)

For the 38th general election, we improved the voter information card by including, after the elector's name, the message "or to the elector", instead of "or occupant". Also, Canada Post was instructed not to forward the card to a new address, but rather to leave it at the address indicated. According to our post-election public opinion survey, which was conducted for Elections Canada by EKOS Research Associates Inc., some 84% of respondents recalled receiving a VIC addressed to them personally. Among these, some 95% recalled that the personal information on the VIC (name, address) was correct.

Communication with electors

Our third key area for improvement was communication with electors. Our advertising campaign for this election featured clear, easily understood messages that informed Canadians about how to register and vote and motivated

them to participate in the election. The ads contained a strong youth element, along with a focus on the option of voting at any time during the election. Messages were also developed specifically for Aboriginal electors, and placed in community newspapers, and on radio stations and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. In preparing our advertising campaign, my Office consulted with key stakeholders, including electors, parliamentarians and political parties.

We also developed a series of outreach initiatives for young people and Aboriginal electors, following research that shows turnout tends to be lower among these groups.

Community relations officers for youth identified neighbourhoods with high concentrations of students for special registration drives, assisted in locating polls in places easily accessible to youth, and informed the community and youth leaders about registration and voting. The redesigned "Young Voters" section of the Elections Canada Web site, which offered information on the electoral process, was visited more than 103,000 times during the election period.

For young electors, we developed or supported a number of initiatives in co-operation with other organizations and agencies, including Student Vote 2004, the Dominion Institute, Rush the Vote, the Historica Foundation, and Cable in the Classroom. We also worked with four post-secondary student associations to develop a poster display for campuses. Details of these partnerships are provided in my report to Parliament.

In developing our outreach initiatives for Aboriginal electors, we benefited greatly from consultations with leaders of



Electors who were not already on the lists could register when they went to vote, either at the advance polls or on election day.

national Aboriginal associations. Also useful was the Roundtable on Aboriginal Youth and the Federal Electoral Process, which Elections Canada hosted, together with the Canadian Centre for Indigenous Research, Culture, Language and Education, at Carleton University in January 2004. These consultations provided valuable opportunities for dialogue, learning and information sharing.

Half of the 329 community relations officers appointed by returning officers for the 38th general election were for Aboriginal communities. They helped with targeted revision, arranged polling stations in Aboriginal communities, helped recruit Aboriginal poll officials, and informed returning officers about issues of concern to the local communities. More than 600 polls were established on First Nations reserves and in Inuit and Métis communities, and more than 2,000 Aboriginal persons served as deputy returning officers and poll clerks.

Elections Canada worked with friendship centres to keep Aboriginal people informed about the election and, with the help of the National Aboriginal Women's Association, distributed key materials in English, French and Inuktitut, including 240,000 voter information guides. The Elections Canada Web site also posted materials in 10 other frequently used Aboriginal languages.

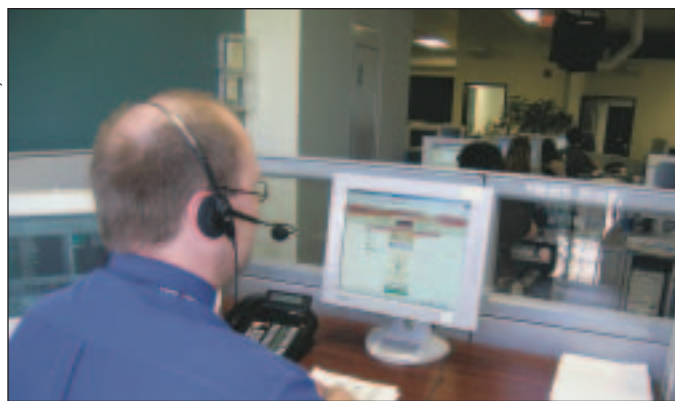
Aboriginal electoral participation received greater public attention during this election than ever before. One week before election day, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine, held a press conference where he said, "The Assembly of First Nations, for the first time in recent history, is encouraging our people to get to the polls and to vote."

Responses to enquiries from electors

To better respond to elector enquiries, we developed a 24-hour-a-day Voter Information Service (VIS), which included an automated Voice Response System, call centres, and a self-service facility on the Web. The VIS could tell an elector phoning in or on the Web where he or she was to vote; only the postal code or address was needed. By the end of the election period, some 750,000 calls were handled by Elections Canada and 1.1 million were handled locally by the returning officers.

My Office also redesigned its Web site to provide more information than ever before to electors. During the election period, the Web site had 1,580,672 visits, a 76% increase over the 37th general election. Our new Election Night Results application handled 50,186 visits during a three-hour period.

Photo: Wayne Brown



An information officer at a call centre in Ottawa answers an elector's questions.

Voting in the 38th general election

In total, 13,683,570 electors cast ballots in the 2004 general election. Most of them voted on election day, at more than 60,000 polling stations in nearly 15,000 locations, including approximately 1,100 mobile polls. Almost 1.25 million electors, an increase of more than 60% over the 2000 election, voted in advance. Some 2,700 advance polling sites were open on June 18, 19 and 21.

Just over 250,000 Canadians voted by special ballot in the 2004 general election. This included some 22,300 ballots cast by Canadian Forces electors, and just over 7,700 votes by Canadians living outside Canada. Other electors who made use of the special ballot included students away from home, patients in acute care hospitals, incarcerated electors and individuals living or working in remote areas, including 23 lighthouses in British Columbia, several fire lookout stations in Alberta, two diamond mines in the Northwest Territories, a gold mine in Nunavut and the Voisey's Bay construction project in Labrador.

The official turnout at the June 28, 2004, election was 60.9%. Official turnout for the 2000 election was 64.1% – revised from the initial report of 61.2%, following removal of duplicates on the final list of electors.

Conclusion

Elections Canada is continuing its analysis of the 2004 general election through surveys with various stakeholders. These will assist in refining our systems and procedures and in finalizing my recommendations for improvements to the *Canada Elections Act*.

Elections Canada also contributed to the 2004 Canadian Election Study (CES), a major academic study that has been



Members of the Canadian Forces – including teachers and administrative support staff at Canadian Forces schools outside Canada – vote in a federal election by special ballot wherever they are stationed. There were more than 62,000 registered electors in the Canadian Forces, serving in 1,046 units both in and outside Canada. In Afghanistan, Warrant Officer Robert McCann of Québec receives the ballot and candidate list on June 15, 2004, at Camp Julien, at the advance poll for members of Canadian Forces units taking part in the International Security Assistance Force.

conducted for every Canadian general election since 1968.² Elections Canada has partnered with the CES since the 1997 general election. The first article in this issue of *Electoral Insight* is by the 2004 CES team.

During the election, the issue of voter turnout received a great deal of attention from interested individuals, community organizations and the media. In particular, the participation of young voters was one of the most prominent issues of the campaign – although it did not become politicized. Encouraging youth participation has been a key undertaking of my Office, as it is a legislative responsibility according to section 18 of the *Canada Elections Act*. As Chief Electoral Officer, I strive to make all

Canadians aware of the electoral process and their democratic right to vote. Our key message reflects the fact that the right to vote, which lies at the heart of our democratic system, stems from the intrinsic value, the fundamental equality of every individual. However, that right is only meaningful when it is used. Voting is the *geste primaire* of democracy.

Elections Canada is continuing to focus on youth turnout. To do this, we have conducted a study on the rate of turnout by age group in the 2004 election, using a random sample of polling divisions selected from electoral districts in every province and territory.³ The results of this study show that for first-time electors (18 to 21½ years old), the turnout rate was 38.7%. While this appears to be a significant increase over the rate of youth turnout at the 2000 election, which was reported to be 25%, I would caution that in light of the different methodologies employed, direct comparisons cannot be made.⁴ We will be pursuing research on participation.

In concluding, I wish to thank the authors who contributed to this issue. Their articles provide new insights into a range of important issues. In doing so, they not only deepen our understanding of the 38th general election; they contribute to the ongoing public discussions about how to improve Canada's electoral process. Elections Canada is committed to continuing reforms that have helped make Canada a model of electoral democracy around the world. Research is an important part of that process. ✕

Jean-Pierre Kingsley

NOTES

1. *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the 38th General Election Held on June 28, 2004*. Submitted to Parliament on October 21, 2004. Available at www.elections.ca/gen/rep/re2/stat2004_e.pdf.
2. With one exception – the 1972 election.
3. The analysis, which involved some 95,000 voters in total, has a statistical reliability of ±4%, 19 times out of 20, when the results are generalized to the entire Canadian voting-age population.

4. The figure of 25% was for 18–24-year-olds. It was drawn from a study, which my Office commissioned in 2002, titled “Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters,” by professors Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc. That study was based on a survey of voters and non-voters (a copy of the study, along with the methodology report and the database, are available on Elections Canada's Web site at www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=

[loi&document=index&dir=tur/tud&lang=e&textonly=false](http://www.elections.ca/loi&document=index&dir=tur/tud&lang=e&textonly=false)). As in all survey-based studies, the rate of voter turnout was over-reported. Consequently, and in keeping with standard practice, the researchers used statistical corrections or weights to estimate the rate of turnout for the different age groups.



Missing the Message Young Adults and the Election Issues

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Voter turnout in last June's federal election confounded optimistic predictions that a close election would reverse the decline in electoral participation. Even though the outcome of the election remained uncertain, Canadians stayed away from the polls in record numbers. Since the 1988 election, turnout has dropped 15 points to reach a historic low of 60.9% in 2004. Detailed analyses of electoral participation since the 1968 federal election indicate that much of the decline has been driven by generational replacement.¹ Today's young Canadians are much less likely to vote than their parents or their grandparents were when they were in their twenties. Indeed, according to our survey results, turnout in the 2004 federal election was 15 points lower among those aged 18 to 29 than it was among those aged 30 and over. While no single factor explains this trend,² many young Canadians seem to be tuning out of politics altogether.

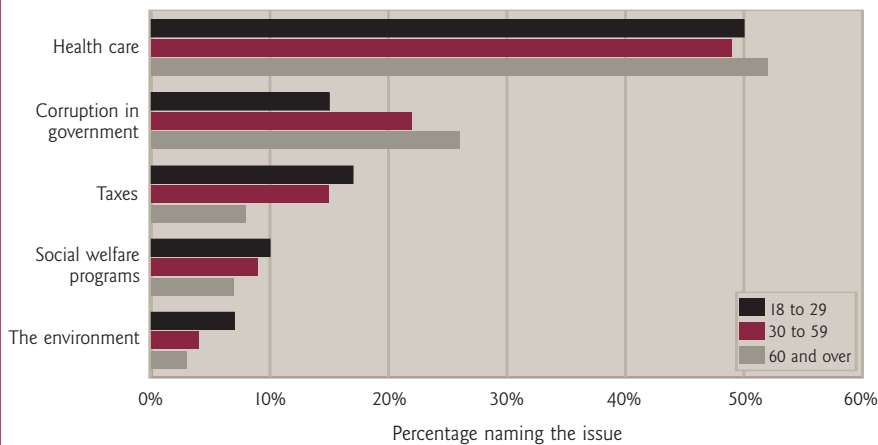
Low voter turnout on the part of young Canadians has generated a great deal of concern. Indeed, it was one of the most talked-about facets of the 2004 election. And yet very little is known about how this disengagement is affecting electoral representation. We address this question by asking

whether – and how – the opinions of young Canadians on a variety of topical issues differ from those of older Canadians. Our data come from the 2004 Canadian Election Study.³

Do young Canadians have different priorities?

Popular commentary on youth disengagement suggests that young Canadians are turned off electoral politics because party platforms and party leaders pay too little attention to the issues that really concern younger citizens. But this hypothesis does not seem to hold water when we examine one of the issues that is commonly assumed to be important to this generation, namely the environment. When Canadians aged 18 to 29 were asked to select the issue that was most important to them personally in the election, only 7% selected the environment from among the five possible choices (see Figure 1). Indeed, the environment was the lowest-ranked of the five issues in this age group, as it was among older Canadians. And only 16% of those under 30 named the environment as their second most important issue.

Figure 1
Most Important Issue in the Election



The number one issue for Canadians of all ages was health. In every age group, approximately half identified health as their number one issue and another quarter chose it as their next most important issue. Indeed, a striking finding from the survey data is how similar are the priorities of Canadians, regardless of their age. This makes it difficult to attribute the decline in youth voting to a neglect of the issues that matter to young people. The only appreciable difference among age

groups is in the relative importance people attach to the issues of corruption in government and taxes. The corruption issue was the second-ranked issue for Canadians 30 years and older, but ranked third, just behind taxes, for those under 30.

The similarity in priorities is surprising in light of conventional wisdom about

the impact of the life cycle on voting. The likelihood of voting typically increases by about 15 points between the ages of 20 and 50.⁴ One explanation for this phenomenon is that there are age-related variations in the personal relevance of the issues that typically dominate the political agenda. Health care, for example, is assumed to matter more as people get older and they have to worry about the health of their children, then their aging relatives, and finally themselves. Similarly, taxation is assumed to be more salient to people during their peak earning years. It turns out, though, that the life cycle had rather modest effects on priorities in last June's election.

A striking finding from the survey data is how similar are the priorities of Canadians, regardless of their age.

Are young Canadians more critical of business and government?

Another recurring theme in discussions about young adults concerns their disaffection with corporate Canada and big government alike. Certainly, young people are more skeptical about the free enterprise system than are older Canadians. They are the most likely to reject the notion that everyone benefits, including the poor, when businesses make a lot of money. And they are the most likely to disagree with the idea that people who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not the system (see Figure 2). However, this is not the majority view: more than half of this age group agreed with the statement that people have only themselves to blame. And the young were actually the least likely to think

Photo: Randy Harquail



Figure 2
Views on the Role of the State and Free Enterprise

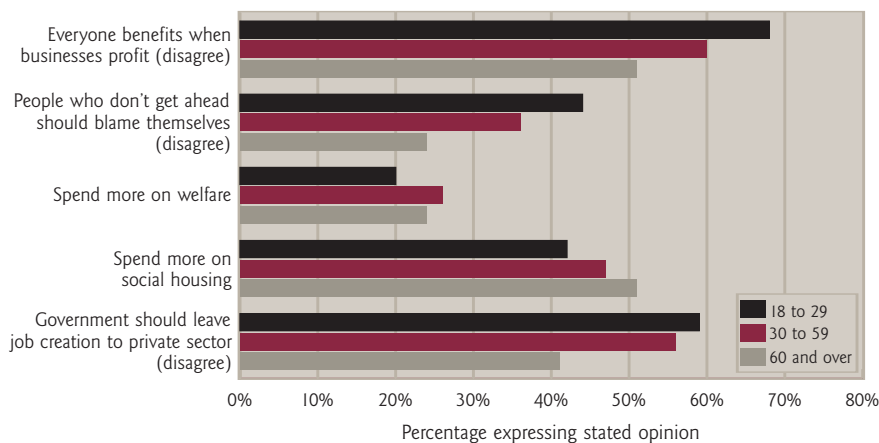


Figure 3
Views on Social Issues

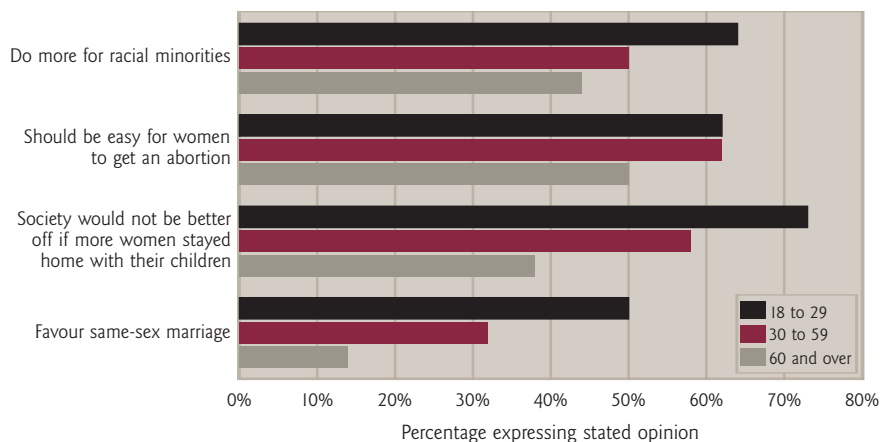
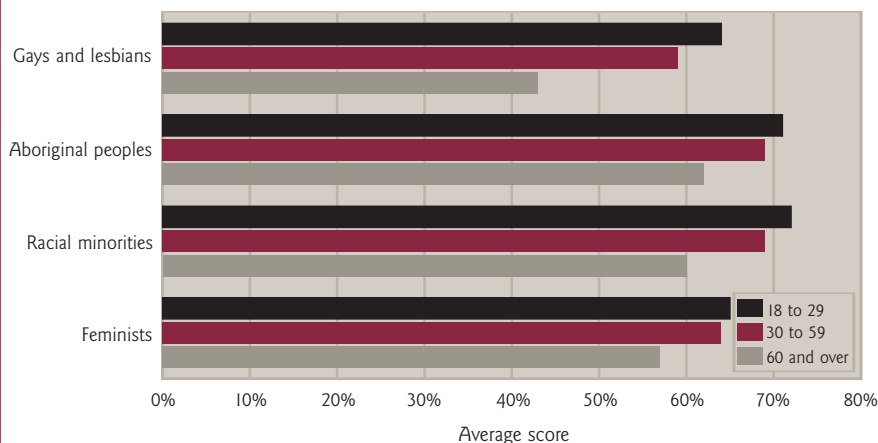


Figure 4
Feelings About Groups in Society



that spending on welfare and/or social housing should be increased.

Young people were also the least likely to want to see corporate taxes increased: 38% of the under-30s favoured higher corporate taxes, compared with 52% of those aged 30 to 59, and 44% of those aged 60 and up. And they were no more likely than Canadians at large (32%) to think that business should be less powerful (28%), though they were the least likely (31%) to think that unions should have less power. In short, it is difficult to detect in these data any particular hostility toward business on the part of Canadians in this age group. True, the under-30s seem reluctant to leave job creation entirely to the private sector, but they are not very different in this regard from those aged 30 to 59 (see Figure 2).

Evidence of particularly strong disaffection with government and politics on the part of young Canadians is also hard to find. Certainly, there are indications of political disaffection among this age group, but levels of disaffection among the young are no more profound than they are among older Canadians. Young people turn out to be close to the Canadian average when it comes to believing that politicians are ready to lie to get elected (86%) or that political parties hardly ever keep their election promises (51%). In fact, if anything, they express less frustration with politics than do older Canadians. People aged 18 to 29 are the least likely to think that all federal political parties are basically the same, that there isn't really a choice (33%). They are also the least likely to believe that the government does not care much what people like them think (53%), and they are actually the most likely to say that they are at least fairly satisfied

with the way democracy works in Canada (63%).

Are young Canadians more open to diversity and new lifestyles?

So far, this portrait of attitudes and views about politics reveals surprisingly few differences between young Canadians and those aged 30 and over. The picture begins to change, however, when we turn to attitudes toward such social issues as race, gender and same-sex marriage. Young people, for example, are the most likely to say that more should be done for racial minorities (see Figure 3). This is very likely a generational difference. These young adults were socialized in a Canada that was far more multiracial than the Canada that their parents or their grandparents experienced during their formative years. Consequently, it is plausible to suppose that they are more likely to have friends and acquaintances that have had personal experience of racial prejudice and discrimination. And, of course, young people themselves are more likely to be members of a racial minority.

Younger Canadians are likely to have had different formative experiences on other fronts, too. For example, they were born into a society where unprecedented numbers of women are working for pay outside the home and barriers to entry into many professions have been falling away. As a result, they are much more likely than previous generations to have fathers who took an active role in raising their children and running their homes. It is hardly surprising, then, to see substantial differences in views about gender roles from one age group to the next. The under-30s are much more likely to disagree with the notion that society

would be better off if more women stayed home with their children. In fact, they were twice as likely as people in their sixties and older to reject this traditional conception of gender roles. The young are also more likely than their older counterparts to believe that it should be easy for women to obtain an abortion. In this respect, though, their attitudes were not so different from those of Canadians aged 30 to 59.

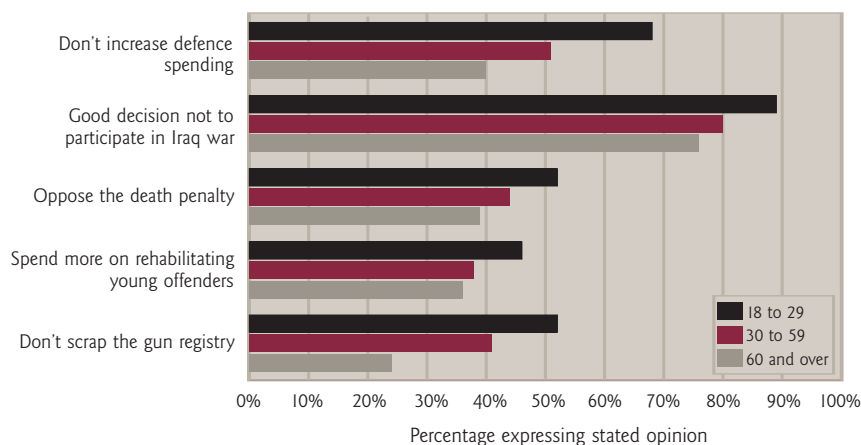
Today's young adults have also grown up in a society that increasingly accepts diverse lifestyles and sexual orientations. This is reflected in their significantly higher levels of support for same-sex marriage. Fully half of 18- to 29-year-olds declared themselves to be in favour, compared with only 14% of those aged 60 and up. Underpinning these differences are very different feelings about gays and lesbians (see Figure 4). When asked to rate their feelings on a 0 to 100 scale, young people typically gave gays and lesbians a positive score, and so did those aged 30 to 59. Notice that those aged 60 and over were much more likely to provide negative (that is, less than 50) ratings for these groups.

Indeed, young people were more likely to have positive feelings about a number of minorities. In each case, however, Canadians 60 and over typically expressed the least positive feelings, regardless of whether they were asked about racial minorities, Aboriginal peoples, feminists or, most especially, gays and lesbians. The feelings of those aged 30 to 59 were not that different, on average, from those of their younger counterparts.

Are young Canadians more opposed to the use of force?

Canada's decision not to participate in the war against Iraq was endorsed by a majority of Canadians in every age group (see Figure 5). However, young people were even more clearly inclined to believe that this was the right decision. Similar age differences are apparent on a variety of outlooks concerning the use of force. These differences show up particularly strongly on the question of defence spending. A clear majority of those aged 18 to 29 were opposed to any increase in defence spending.

Figure 5
Views on Law and Order



Young people also hold somewhat different views on questions of law and order. Unlike older Canadians, for example, they are more likely to oppose the death penalty for people convicted of murder. This is actually the majority position among those under 30: those opposed to capital punishment outnumber those in favour by a margin of 15 points. Opinions among the older age groups are much more evenly divided. Young people are also a little more likely to believe that spending more on rehabilitation is a better way than tougher sentences to deal with youths who commit violent crimes. But, the most striking age difference emerges on the issue of Canada's gun registry. Just over half of young people are opposed to doing away with the gun registry entirely. That position is very much a minority opinion among older Canadians, especially those aged 60 and over.

Are young Canadians getting the message?

This overview of age differences in attitudes toward a number of current

political issues offers some reassurance. Young Canadians appear to have a set of priorities that are surprisingly similar to those of older Canadians. Health was clearly *the* issue in the last election for a large number of Canadians, young as well as old. Moreover, there were relatively few issues on which the opinions of young adults diverged markedly from those of their elders. Instead, the differences were typically ones of degree. Young people, for example, tend to be more critical of the free enterprise system, but quite a number of older people share their skepticism. Spending priorities are not appreciably different, either, though predictably many more young people want spending on education to increase. In the one exception, defence spending, a majority of young people opposes any increase. However, there are some issues on which generational divides do appear, namely gender roles, same-sex marriage, and race. To the extent that young people are less likely to vote, there is a risk

that their voices will not be heard on these particular questions.

Based on the evidence presented here, it would be premature to talk of a crisis of representation. The fact that young people tend to be the most satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada and the least likely to have negative feelings about the political parties and their leaders is encouraging. Even so, there is no reason to view low turnout on the part of the young with complacency; not least, because it is symptomatic of a broader disconnection from politics.

Young people rated their interest in politics at only 4.5 on a 0 to 10 scale.

The 2004 Canadian Election Study provides abundant evidence of this disengagement. Young and old may care about some of the same issues, but the under-30s are much less able to name a political party that would be best at dealing with their number one concern. This finding is not attributable to the fact that many of them see little to choose among the contenders; people in this age group are actually the least likely to think that there is not really a choice. Rather, it signifies a lack of political awareness on the part of many young people. Young people rated their interest in politics at only 4.5 on a 0 to 10 scale (where zero indicated no interest at all), compared with 7.5 for those in their sixties and up.

Some of the gaps in young people's knowledge of current Canadian politics are truly striking. During the final 10 days of the campaign, 40% of young people were still not able to come up with Paul Martin's name



Photo: Getty Images

The 2004 Canadian Election Study found health care was by far the most important 2004 election issue for electors of all ages.



Photo: CP (Fred Chartrand)

Even near the end of the 36-day campaign, many young people could not name the prime minister or other party leaders. Pictured at a television debate (left to right) were Conservative leader Stephen Harper, N.D.P. leader Jack Layton, Liberal leader Paul Martin and Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe.

when asked to identify the leader of the Liberal Party. Lack of knowledge of the other party leaders was even more widespread: the figures were 53% for the Conservative leader, 66% for the leader of the New Democratic Party, and (in Quebec) 36% for the leader of

the Bloc Québécois. Young people found it harder still to correctly match up which promises were made by which of the political parties. Health may have been a priority issue, but even in the closing days of the campaign, fewer than one in three

knew which party was promising four billion dollars to reduce waiting times for surgery. Taxes were more important than the environment to young people. Even so, only 28% knew which party was promising to do away with the goods and services tax on family essentials. Most young people opposed increased spending on defence, yet only 40% knew which party was promising to increase military spending by two billion dollars a year. Similarly, a majority of young people opposed scrapping the gun registry, but fewer than one in three knew which party was proposing to do this. It is hard to cast an informed ballot if you do not know who the potential prime ministers are or what their parties are promising.

Issues that concern many young people are on the political agenda, and the political parties are taking positions on these issues. The problem seems to be that too often these messages are just not registering with a significant proportion of younger Canadians. ✕

NOTES

1. André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil and Neil Nevitte, "Where does turnout decline come from?," *European Journal of Political Research* Vol. 43, No. 2 (March 2004), pp. 221–236. See also Elisabeth Gidengil, André Blais, Neil Nevitte and Richard Nadeau, "Turned Off or Tuned Out? Youth Participation in Politics," *Electoral Insight* Vol. 5, No. 2 (July 2003), pp. 9–14. This was a special issue of *Electoral Insight* devoted to the topic of youth participation in elections.
2. See Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, "Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters" (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 2003). Available at www.elections.ca.
3. The 2004 Canadian Election Study involved a rolling cross-section campaign survey with a representative sample of 4,323 Canadians, a post-election survey, and a mail-back questionnaire. The campaign survey response rate was 55%. The Institute for Social Research at York University conducted the field work. The study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, with additional funding from Elections Canada. The data reported in this article are taken from the campaign survey and from the second release of the post-election survey. Copies of the questionnaires are available at www.ces-eeec.umontreal.ca.
4. See Gidengil et al., "Turned Off or Tuned Out?"



Different Strokes Why Young Canadians Don't Vote

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If the “Do Not Vote Party” had run candidates in the 2004 Canadian federal election, it would have formed the Government. Such is the state of political participation in one of the world’s oldest democracies, where general apathy and lack of interest are starting to take over the electoral process. On June 28, 2004, about two in five Canadian voters decided to stay home and not to vote. This marked the fourth consecutive election with declining voter turnout.

After the 2000 election, when only 64.1%¹ of registered voters went to the polls, election officials and politicians took notice and poured efforts and resources into rectifying the situation. For instance, Elections Canada ran an ad campaign during the election specifically targeting young Canadians, to encourage them to vote. Even the Prime Minister made democratic renewal one of his objectives. When Paul Martin officially became Canada’s 21st prime minister on December 12, 2003, he stated: “As prime minister, I look forward to the opportunity to rally Canadians toward a new sense of national purpose and around a new agenda of change and achievement ... We are going to change the way things work in Ottawa in order to re-engage Canadians in the political process and achieve demonstrable progress on our priorities.”² And yet, the downward trend in voter turnout continued.

The lack of participation in elections is not a problem solely plaguing Canada. After all, we are quick to defend ourselves by pointing out that less than half of American voters participate in their elections. But such a comparison should not bring any solace. As John Kenneth Galbraith once

observed, the systematic lack of participation of specific groups of citizens in the electoral process leads to a situation where politicians and political strategists simply ignore the needs and issues of those who fail to participate. They develop electoral platforms designed to reap electoral gains from those likely to vote: white, affluent, older and educated citizens, creating a culture of contentment in which the groups most likely to benefit from government intervention are excluded from policy-making considerations.³ This phenomenon is of particular interest in the Canadian context.

As André Blais and his colleagues from the Canadian Election Study team have demonstrated, the lack of interest in voting does not affect all Canadians, but is largely confined to a specific group of voters that is slowly disenfranchising itself. As their analysis showed, the single most important point to grasp about the decline in participation since 1988 is that turnout has not declined in the electorate at large, but mostly among Canadians born after 1970. Accordingly, the answer to why turnout was so low in 2000 is that it was being dragged down by the increasing weight of the younger generations, who are less interested in politics than their elders. The implication is that explanations that stress the particularities of the election, like the fact that there was no “real” reason for voting, are not compelling.⁴

The results of the 2004 election proved the prescience of the Canadian Election Study team’s assertion. After all, unlike the elections in 1997 and 2000, the 2004 election was a close contest with an uncertain outcome. The close race did little to compel Canadians to go to the polls. As



Young Canadians who cast a ballot are in the minority, as many members of their generation show little interest in voting.

Blais and his colleagues suggested, the bottom line appears to be that the generation born after 1970 is less interested in electoral politics than their elders, they pay less attention, they are less well-informed – and it is not clear at this point that they are turning to other forms of political involvement instead. On a more positive note, the younger generation is no more disaffected with politics than the older cohorts are. The problem seems to be one of disengagement rather than of active discontent.⁵

The aim of this essay is to build on the current understanding of voter turnout in Canada. While previous studies have established who is less likely to vote, we want to understand the reasons why the generations of voters born after 1970 are more likely to stay away from the polls. Based on the results of a national survey conducted by POLLARA with 1,000 adult Canadians in the days immediately following the election,⁶ we will suggest that one of

the reasons for low voter turnout resides in the fact that people born after 1970 hold a different set of priorities and interact with the political process differently than older cohorts. We will suggest that differences in priorities, assessments of parties, leaders and candidates, and reactions to campaign dynamics may explain why younger voters are less interested in voting.

Priorities

On May 23, 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin asked Governor General Adrienne Clarkson to dissolve Parliament and call a federal general election to be held on June 28. Martin's opening barrage was a nationalistic warning that the Conservatives would make Canada look like the United States. He attempted to frame the key ballot-box question as a stark choice between a Liberal government that would invest billions of dollars a year in health care and social programs, and a Conservative government that

would destroy Canada's social fabric with U.S.-style policies that would reduce taxes to rock bottom.⁷ The Conservatives shot back that the

Lack of participation in elections is not a problem solely plaguing Canada.

Liberal goal was to distract from the corruption evident in the sponsorship scandal. On the second day of the campaign, the main party leaders jostled for position on tax cuts, with Liberal leader Paul Martin pledging not to raise taxes, Conservative Stephen Harper promising deep cuts and N.D.P. Jack Layton promising fiscal responsibility.⁸ On May 25, Paul Martin proposed a \$9-billion-plus program for health care, putting forward his campaign's central plank and trying to push the election debate back onto his terms after months devoted to scandals and alleged mismanagement of public funds.⁹ The Conservative platform, aside from its call for tax cuts that would lower tax rates for incomes between \$35,000 and \$70,000, proposed



Going to the polls at a senior citizens' complex in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where turnout among older voters is usually high.

Table 1
Most Important Issues, 2004 General Election*

Issue	All voters ** %	Voters born after 1970 *** %	Older voters *** %
Health care	32	19	33
Unemployment, jobs	1	–	1
Economy	3	8	3
Deficit, debt	4	3	4
Taxes	3	6	3
National unity, Quebec, regionalism	1	–	1
Resources, environment	2	2	2
Social issues	1	3	1
Government, trust, parties' accountability, leaders	18	16	18
Sponsorship scandal	4	1	4
Education	3	11	1
Other	11	8	12
None, don't know	18	23	18

*Question (open-ended): In your opinion, what was the most important issue in the 2004 election?

**weighted results

***unweighted results

\$500 million in deductions for families with children; an immediate meeting with the premiers to develop a plan on health care; and increased defence spending.¹⁰

The party leaders were deliberately framing the electoral discourse around the priorities of the Canadian electorate as a whole. As Table 1 indicates, one third of Canadians mentioned health care as the most important election issue, while another 18% cited issues related to trust and accountability, with 4% specifically mentioning the sponsorship scandal. Issues related to the economy (economy as a whole, unemployment, deficit and debt, and taxes) were mentioned by 11% of Canadian voters.

However, some differences can be found between younger and older voters. Voters born after 1970 represent 19.5% of the overall sample and older voters represent 80.5%. While both groups

shared the same set of top priorities – health care and accountability – young voters were proportionally less likely to identify health care as their top priority. The same can be said for the sponsorship scandal. Young voters were more likely than older voters to want to hear about economic issues and education. These issues were generally neglected during the election campaign. Hence, given their respective sets of concerns, a campaign focused on health care and the sponsorship scandal was less likely to resonate with young voters than with their older counterparts. If young voters happened to be listening to the electoral discourse, they were less likely

than older voters to hear politicians discuss issues they cared about.

Factors in voting choice

Election studies have repeatedly been asking Canadians to identify the most important factors influencing their choice when they vote. The question is formatted to ask first whether party leaders, local candidates “here in this constituency,” or parties as a whole were most important in deciding whom to support in the election. Then, a follow-up question asks whether the choice of leader or candidate was motivated by issues or by the personal qualities of the individuals, or in the case of the parties, whether it was the party’s “general approach” or stand on specific issues that was most important. This set of variables has been central to the study of voting behaviour.¹¹

Table 2 summarizes the findings for the 2004 election. It reports in parentheses the proportion of the leader, candidate and party vote that was motivated by “issues” rather than personal qualities or the general approach of parties. In 2004, half of Canadians cited parties as the most important influence on

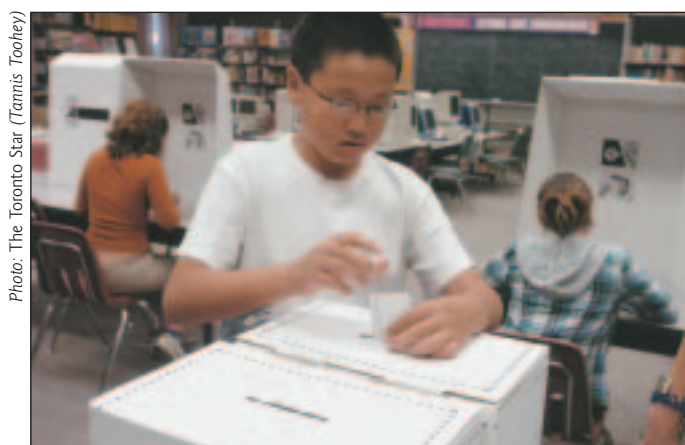


Photo: The Toronto Star (Tannis Toohey)

Grade 6 student Jeffrey Tran of Bloorlea Middle School, in Toronto, was among more than 263,000 students, in 1,168 schools, who took part in Student Vote 2004. The parallel elections in June, supported by Elections Canada, familiarized those who have not yet reached voting age with the voting process.

Table 2
Most Important Factors in Voting, 2004 Election*

	Party leaders	Local candidates	Party as a whole
Overall**	24% (60)	20% (49)	50% (51)
Voters born after 1970***	27% (54)	14% (86)	59% (51)
Older voters***	25% (61)	22% (53)	52% (51)

*The percentage of respondents who chose each factor because of the issue positions of the leaders, candidates and parties is shown in parentheses.

**weighted results

***unweighted results

Table 3
Time of Voting Decision

	Overall* %	Voters born after 1970** %	Older voters** %
Before election	42	33	45
When election was called	8	2	9
During the campaign	24	29	23
In the final days	25	37	24

*weighted results

**unweighted results

Table 4
Evaluation of Leaders (on a 1–10 scale)

	Overall*	Voters born after 1970**	Older voters**
Martin	5.1	4.7	5.1
Harper	4.6	4.7	4.6
Layton	4.6	5.4	4.6
Duceppe	4.5	5.5	4.3

*weighted results

**unweighted results

their choice in voting. Party leaders came in second at 24%, while local candidates had the least impact on the final voting decision. Once again, we can see some clear differences between younger and older voters in terms of degrees of importance given to each factor. Specifically, voters born after 1970 relied more on “the party as a whole” to guide their voting choice than their older counterparts, while paying much less attention to local candidates. However, when young

voters looked at their local candidates, they overwhelmingly concentrated on the candidates’ stand on issues, rather than their personal characteristics.

More generational differences can be found in the impact of the campaign on voting choice. As Table 3 shows, 50% of voters had already made up their minds about whom to support by the

time the election was called. About one quarter (24%) waited until the campaign began, presumably to find out more about the issues, leaders and parties, before deciding which party to support. One quarter (25%) made up their minds in the final days of the campaign.

However, while the campaign had little impact on voting choice for a majority of Canadians – especially older voters – voters born after 1970 took more time to make up their minds and were more likely to be influenced by the events of the election campaign. Particularly striking is the 37% of young voters who decided on their choice of candidate only in the final days of the campaign. We are unable to determine whether those young voters remained undecided until the final days or simply waited until the last minute to focus on their choices. Nevertheless, it is clear that the campaign was more relevant to younger than to older voters.

The final point to be made about the 2004 election pertains to leaders. For the first time since 1984, three of the largest parties had new leaders and leadership was central to the party strategies. Throughout the election campaign, Canadians had the opportunity to observe the new leaders and to pass judgment. The campaign did not leave them unscathed. In the POLLARA study, Canadians were

In 2004, half of Canadians cited parties as the most important influence on their choice in voting.

asked to rate their impressions of each party leader on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “not at all impressed” and

10 being “very impressed”). Overall, the Liberal Martin received the highest rating at 5.1, ahead of the Conservative Harper (4.6), Layton of the N.D.P. (4.6) and Duceppe of the Bloc Québécois (4.5). The first point to be made is that all the leaders garnered low ratings. Between 1974 and 1993, most leaders registered scores at least over the midpoint,¹² while in 2004 only Martin did so, just barely.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that voters born after 1970 were harsher on the incumbent, but more generous than the rest of the electorate in their assessments of the other party leaders. Of particular interest are the comparatively high ratings received by Jack Layton and Gilles Duceppe. We cannot determine the substance of those differences, but the way young voters evaluate leaders is another characteristic that may set them apart from the electorate as a whole.

Conclusion

This analysis aimed to expand on our understanding of voter turnout in Canada. While previous studies have provided a general grasp of who is less likely to exercise the right to vote, we wanted to understand the reasons why young Canadians were those most likely to abstain from voting. Our findings demonstrated that voters born after 1970 hold a different set of priorities and interact with the political process differently than older cohorts.

Specifically, young voters were significantly less likely to identify health care and the sponsorship scandal as their top priorities. They were more likely to want to hear about economic issues and education than were their older counterparts. Voters born after 1970 relied more on “the party as a whole” to guide their voting choice, while relying much less on local candidates. Moreover, while the campaign

had little impact on the voting choice of a majority of Canadians, especially older generations, 37% of voters born after 1970 decided for whom they would vote in the final days of the campaign. They also evaluated party leaders differently.

This analysis does not provide the final word on explaining low voter turnout. However, it uncovers some preliminary reasons for low turnout among young voters. Their lack of interest in using their right to vote may not be simply the result of apathy, but a reaction to what parties have been offering them in terms of issue discussions and campaign dynamics. Changing the content of electoral discourse to reach those voters, as well as adjusting campaign dynamics to reflect young voters’ decision-making patterns, may be two ways political parties and leaders may attempt to re-engage young voters who currently cannot relate to the electoral process. ❌

NOTES

1. Originally reported by Elections Canada as 61.2%. During subsequent maintenance of the National Register of Electors, the agency removed the names of voters who had died and duplicates arising from moves from the final voters lists of the 2000 general election. Calculations based on the correct number of electors on the lists resulted in the higher national voter turnout of 64.1%.
2. As reported on CTV. See transcript, “Paul Martin Sworn in as Prime Minister,” www.ctv.ca, December 12, 2003.
3. See John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Culture of Contentment* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
4. See analysis in André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte, *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 46–61.
5. Blais et al., *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory*.
6. A total of 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted with adult Canadians between June 29 and July 4, 2004. The sample distribution is proportional to the distribution of the Canadian adult population based on the most recent census data. The survey was conducted by POLLARA and donated to the author for academic use. I would like to thank Mr. Michael Marzolini, Chairman of POLLARA, for his generous contribution.
7. Heather Scofield and Campbell Clark, “Martin Waves the Flag,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 24, 2004, p. A1.
8. Robert Fife, “Martin Pledges Not to Raise Taxes,” *The National Post*, May 25, 2004, p. A1.
9. Heather Scofield and Campbell Clark, “Martin’s Big Pledge: \$9-billion for Health,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 26, 2004, p. A1.
10. Brian Laghi and Heather Scofield, “Harper Platform Promises Sweeping Change,” *The Globe and Mail*, June 12, 2004, p. A4.
11. See, for instance, Harold D. Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett, *Absent Mandate: Canadian Electoral Politics in an Era of Restructuring*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1996) and Jon H. Pammett, “The People’s Verdict,” in Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dorman, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 2000*, Chapter 13 (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001), pp. 293–317.
12. Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate*, p. 77.



Aboriginal Candidates in the 2004 General Election

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This article summarizes statistical information about Aboriginal candidates in the 2004 general election, as one aspect of the representation of Aboriginal people in Canada's political institutions. Since political parties are one of the main vehicles for political representation, the article analyzes all the self-identified Aboriginal candidates endorsed by each of the five parties that obtained the most support from electors, their electoral districts, their proportion of the vote and the success of their campaigns. The data and analysis suggest that more representation (numeric and substantive) of Aboriginal peoples in our electoral process is necessary.

The information in this article comes from various sources, including the Web sites of Statistics Canada, Elections Canada and the registered political parties, and information provided by representatives of each of the political parties discussed. The political parties included in the analysis are the Bloc Québécois (BQ), Conservative Party of Canada (Conservatives), Green Party of Canada (Greens), Liberal Party of Canada (Liberals), and the New Democratic Party (N.D.P.). The analysis does not include candidates from any party other than the five listed.¹ The information in this article relies heavily on the process of self-identification. Despite the inherent flaws in using self-identification as the only means of identifying Aboriginal candidates, it is the only means available at this time.²

Aboriginal people in Canada

According to the most recent census data, Aboriginal people account for approximately 3.3% of the Canadian population.³ There are important differences between the Aboriginal population and the total population. For instance, Aboriginal

peoples, as a whole, tend to be younger than the total population, with a larger proportion of persons in the under-19 age group.⁴ In terms of gender breakdown, the female-to-male ratio is slightly higher (in favour of females) than in the total population.⁵ The importance of these subtle differences will become apparent in the following discussion.

Aboriginal candidates in the 2004 election

The 2004 general election saw an increase in the number of electoral districts from 301 to 308. Twenty-seven candidates who are self-identified as being Aboriginal persons ran for the five political parties in 25 ridings. The BQ, Conservatives, Greens, Liberals and N.D.P. endorsed a total of 1,307 candidates in the 308 electoral districts. Of their 75 candidates, the BQ endorsed 1 Aboriginal candidate (1.33%).⁶ The Conservatives had 3 self-identified Aboriginal candidates of their total 308 (0.97%).⁷ The Greens surpassed them by one, with 4 Aboriginal candidates out of 308 (1.3%).⁸ The N.D.P. had the second highest number of Aboriginal candidates – 8 of their 308 candidates (2.6%).⁹ The Liberals had the greatest number of Aboriginal candidates – 11 of their total 308 (3.57%).¹⁰ Thus the Liberals were the only party in which the percentage of Aboriginal candidates equalled or exceeded the proportion of Aboriginal people in the population as a whole.

How successful were they?

Table 1 shows the Aboriginal candidates in the electoral districts where they sought election. Of the 25 ridings, 23 had only one Aboriginal candidate, one had two Aboriginal candidates (Athabasca), and Churchill River

had three Aboriginal candidates (including Rick Laliberte, who ran as an independent and is therefore not included in the tables). The candidates identified in bold and italics were elected.

Of the 27 Aboriginal candidates who sought election for the five leading parties, only six were successful: Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Western Arctic), Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent), Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North), Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut), Lawrence O'Brien (Labrador), and David Smith (Pontiac). Five of the Aboriginal candidates elected represented the Liberals, while one represented the BQ. Voters did not elect Aboriginal candidates from the other three parties. The provinces of Ontario,

Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the Northwest Territories and Nunavut all had Aboriginal candidates elected.

Candidacies compared to proportion of population

Table 2 highlights the number of Aboriginal candidates compared to the total number of candidates for the five parties, by province/territory. It also indicates what might be considered the ideal number of Aboriginal candidates, based on the Aboriginal population in that province or territory.¹¹ In only 4 of the 13 provinces and territories did the number of Aboriginal candidates closely resemble the Aboriginal proportion of the population. These are Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick,

Photo: Wayne Broun



Elections Canada's efforts to make the federal electoral process welcoming to Aboriginal people and encourage their participation included targeted registration in places like this Native Friendship Centre.

Table 1
Aboriginal Candidates by Electoral District and Political Party*

Electoral district	Liberal	N.D.P.	Green	Conservative	BQ
Kelowna		Starleigh Grass			
Skeena-Bulkley Valley	Miles Richardson				
Athabasca		Robert Cree	Ian Hopfe		
Calgary West		Tim Patterson			
Macleod	Chris Shade				
Westlock-St. Paul	Joe Dion				
Wild Rose		Jeff Horvath			
Churchill River	Al Ducharme	Earl Cook			
Saskatoon-Wanuskewin		Priscilla Settee			
Yorkton-Melville	Ted Quewezance				
Churchill	Ron Evans				
Winnipeg North				Kris Stevenson	
Winnipeg South				Rod Bruinooge	
Brant			Helen-Anne Embry		
Hamilton Centre				Leon O'Connor	
Kenora			Carl Chaboyer		
Middlesex-Kent-Lambton		Kevin Blake			
Niagara West-Glanbrook		Dave Heatley			
Simcoe North	Paul DeVillers				
Louis-Saint-Laurent					Bernard Cleary
Pontiac	David Smith				
Miramichi			Garry Sanipass		
Labrador	Lawrence O'Brien				
Western Arctic	Ethel Blondin-Andrew				
Nunavut	Nancy Karetak-Lindell				

*Candidates identified in bold and italics were elected.

Table 2
Aboriginal Candidates by Province/Territory – 2004 General Election

Province/Territory	Total number of candidates	Number of Aboriginal candidates	Ideal number of Aboriginal candidates	% of candidates who are Aboriginal	% of population that is Aboriginal
British Columbia	144	2	6	1.39	4.43
Alberta	112	6	6	5.36	5.35
Saskatchewan	56	4	8	7.14	13.61
Manitoba	56	3	8	5.36	13.64
Ontario	424	6	7	1.41	1.68
Quebec	375	2	4	0.54	1.12
New Brunswick	40	1	1	2.50	2.38
Nova Scotia	44	0	1	0	1.90
Prince Edward Island	16	0	1	0	1.01
Newfoundland and Labrador	28	1	1	3.57	3.73
Yukon	4	0	1	0	23.28
Northwest Territories	4	1	2	25	50.96
Nunavut	4	1	3	25	85.22
Total	1,307	27	49	2.07	3.30

and Newfoundland and Labrador. Among the areas showing the greatest disparity are Nunavut, British Columbia and Manitoba.

By gender and political party

Table 3 examines Aboriginal candidates by gender and political party. It shows the number of female and male Aboriginal candidates, by party, with comparisons to the total number of candidates and their gender distribution.

As discussed previously, the female-to-male ratio is slightly higher among Aboriginal peoples (51.2% female and 48.8% male) than in the total population (50.9% female and 49.1% male). In general, women tend to be under-represented as electoral candidates.¹² In 2004, they accounted for only 23.1% of all candidates. Aboriginal female candidates are even more under-represented (18.5% of the total number of Aboriginal

Table 3
Candidates by Gender and Political Party

Party	Aboriginal female	Total female	Aboriginal male	Total male	Total
BQ	0	19	1	56	75
Conservative	0	36	3	272	308
Green	1	78	3	230	308
Liberal	2	74	9	234	308
N.D.P.	2	96	6	212	308
Total	5	303	22	1,004	1,307

candidates). Although they are less likely to be selected as candidates, Aboriginal females were more likely to be elected, when compared to all other female candidates. Of the six Aboriginal candidates elected on June 28, two are female (33.3%) and four are male (66.7%). Of the total number of candidates elected, 65 are female (21.1%) and 243 are male (78.9%). However, given the small number of Aboriginal candidates elected, it would not be appropriate to draw broad generalizations from these results.

In terms of representation within political parties, the N.D.P. and the Green Party appear to better represent Aboriginal female candidates, where they made up 25% of the parties' respective total number of Aboriginal candidates. This is not surprising, given that the N.D.P. had a higher percentage of female candidates overall than the other four parties. The Green Party ran male and female Aboriginal candidates at roughly the same proportion as the total distribution of male and female candidates. While in aggregate numbers, the Liberals had the same

number of Aboriginal female candidates as the N.D.P. (and one more than the Greens), the Aboriginal female-to-male ratio is smaller in the N.D.P. and Green Party (1:3 – N.D.P.; 1:3 – Greens; 1:4.5 – Liberals). The BQ and Conservatives, however, did not endorse any female Aboriginal candidates.

Support for Aboriginal candidates

The popular vote received by each successful Aboriginal candidate is also noteworthy. In the ridings where Aboriginal candidates were successful, five had a clear plurality of votes (i.e. at least 5% more votes than the next closest candidate). The exception was Western Arctic, which was the subject of a judicial recount. At first count, the difference between Blondin-Andrew and her closest opponent was only 52 votes. After a partial recount, the difference increased by one to 53 votes. Blondin-Andrew won the seat.¹³

The flip side to the success of the six MPs mentioned above is the lack of electoral success for the other 21 candidates. Of particular interest

here is the fact that although the N.D.P. ran nearly the same number of Aboriginal candidates as the Liberals, none of the Aboriginal N.D.P. candidates were elected. Moreover, voters did not elect any Aboriginal candidates in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island or Yukon. This is of particular concern given the very high proportion of Aboriginal people in Yukon, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the significant proportion of Aboriginal people in Alberta and British Columbia (see Table 2).

This lack of Aboriginal representation does not seem to be the result of an absence of Aboriginal candidates. Churchill River, Saskatchewan, provides an interesting example. In this electoral district, Aboriginal people of voting age account for an estimated 68% of the total population aged 18 and over.¹⁴ In 2004, three Aboriginal candidates vied for success in this riding: Earl Cook (N.D.P.), Al Ducharme (Liberal), and Rick Laliberte (independent). None of

the three was elected. In fact, the non-Aboriginal candidate for the Conservatives, Jeremy Harrison, received a clear plurality of the popular vote over the next closest candidate.¹⁵ In the other 18 ridings where Aboriginal candidates were unsuccessful, each of the successful non-Aboriginal candidates also received a clear plurality of votes.¹⁶

What accounts for the success of 6 Aboriginal candidates, relative to the lack of success of the other 21 Aboriginal candidates? Are there links between a candidate's degree of success and the popularity of the political party he or she represents? Such a link may offer a possible explanation for why the only Aboriginal candidates to be successful in this election were endorsed by the Liberals and BQ. It does not explain, however, why Aboriginal candidates for the increasingly popular Conservatives were not successful. It is possible that policy considerations might be implicated here, as prominent Aboriginal organizations insisted the Conservative Party clarify its policy on Aboriginal issues.¹⁷

Photos: La Ronge Northerner (Scott Boyes)



The northern Saskatchewan electoral district of Churchill River had three Aboriginal candidates (left to right): Earl Cook (New Democrat), Al Ducharme (Liberal) and Rick Laliberte (independent).



At an Ottawa news conference, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine encouraged Aboriginal people to vote and estimated that they had sufficient numbers to be a deciding factor in 63 Canadian electoral districts.

Another possible factor might be the significance of the Aboriginal vote in each electoral district. In the ridings where Aboriginal candidates were successful, the Aboriginal population aged 18 and over varied considerably in size, from a low of 1.51% (Louis-

Saint-Laurent) to a high of 75.84% (Nunavut) of the voting-age population. While a higher percentage of Aboriginal voters might suggest greater support for Aboriginal candidates, this does not appear to be an absolute certainty. In ridings such as Athabasca, Churchill, Churchill River and Kenora where Aboriginal electors exceed 20% of the voting-age population, Aboriginal candidates were not successful.¹⁸ This suggests that more than “shared Aboriginality” is necessary for Aboriginal voters to support an Aboriginal candidate. A desire and ability to vote,¹⁹ political party affiliation, and policy considerations must be some of the factors at play when Aboriginal voters decide for whom to vote. Other variables, such as the candidate’s background, education and political experience, in addition to the demographics and history of the riding are also likely to play a role in determining political success. Further research is necessary to determine the precise role these factors may have played.

Conclusion

As a result of the 2004 general election, 6 of 27 Aboriginal

candidates for the five parties were elected, representing a success rate of 22.22%. This result is bittersweet for Aboriginal peoples. While it represents a record number of Aboriginal members of Parliament, Aboriginal persons fill only 1.9% of the seats in the House of Commons – far from the 3.3% Aboriginal share of the Canadian population. The disparity here is of continuing concern, and more research is necessary to cover the gaps in the existing literature on Aboriginal voter turnout, Aboriginal candidacy and Aboriginal participation in political parties. I suggest that fair and substantive representation can only come from an increased turnout of Aboriginal persons at the polling stations, increased Aboriginal membership in political parties, an increased number of Aboriginal candidates, and ultimately, an increased number of Aboriginal members of Parliament. Such issues present unique challenges for Canadian policy-makers and Aboriginal peoples alike. With increased roles in such political processes, Aboriginal peoples will be able to ensure their fair and substantive representation in Canada’s political institutions. ✕

NOTES

1. The exception is the brief mention of Rick Laliberte, an Aboriginal candidate who ran as an independent in the electoral district of Churchill River.
2. See, for example, Drew Hayden Taylor, “How Native Is Native if You’re Native?” and Bonita Lawrence, “Mixed-Race Urban Native People: Surviving a Legacy of Policies of Genocide,” both in Ron Laliberte, *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press, 2000).
3. Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal peoples of Canada,” www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor/canada.cfm.
4. Statistics Canada, “Population reporting an Aboriginal identity by age groups, provinces and territories (2001 Census),” www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo40c.htm.
5. Statistics Canada, “Age and Sex, 2001 Counts for Both Sexes, for Canada, Provinces and Territories – 100% Data,” www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/AgeSex/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1&Code=0&Table=1a&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Counts&B2=Both.
6. Official with Bloc Québécois, Personal Communication, June 22, 2004.
7. Official with Conservative Party of Canada, Personal Communication, June 22, 2004.
8. Official with Green Party of Canada, Personal Communication, June 22, 2004.
9. Official with New Democratic Party, Personal Communication, June 22, 2004.

10. Liberal Party of Canada, "Paul Martin Celebrates Aboriginal Culture," www.liberal.ca/news_e.aspx?site=news&news=793.
11. This suggestion – that the proportion of Aboriginal candidates from each province should closely resemble the proportion of the population that is Aboriginal – is premised on a particular model of representation, namely the numerical or pictorial approach. According to this view, "parliamentary institutions should be microcosms of the Canadian electorate, with the same balance of demographic characteristics found in the broader population" (see Keith Archer, Roger Gibbins, Rainer Knopff, Heather MacIvor and Leslie A. Pal, *Parameters of Power: Canada's Political Institutions*, 3rd ed. (Canada: Thomson, 2002), p. 194. There are, of course, other models of representation, including the partisan model (MPs are seen as representing their parties) and the territorial model (MPs are seen as representing a particular geographical area). In reality, every MP must juggle multiple representational demands. For Aboriginal people, ideal numerical representation in the House of Commons has tended to be difficult to achieve, largely because the Aboriginal population tends not to be geographically concentrated. For a discussion of the implications of this lack of "critical mass," see Kiera L. Ladner, "The Alienation of Nation: Understanding Aboriginal Electoral Participation," in *Electoral Insight* Vol. 5, No. 3 (November 2003), pp. 21–26.
12. For example, see Lisa Young, "Representation of Women in the Canadian Party System," in William Cross, ed., *Political Parties, Representation, and Electoral Democracy in Canada* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2002).
13. Elections Canada, "Judicial Recount Terminated in the Electoral District of Western Arctic," www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=med&document=jul2004&dir=pre&lang=e&textonly=false.
14. Statistics Canada, "2001 Federal Electoral District Profile," www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/fedprofile/SelectFED.cfm?R=FED03.
15. Elections Canada, "Validated Results of the 38th General Election on June 28, 2004," www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=pas&document=index&dir=38e/resval&lang=e&textonly=false.
16. Elections Canada, "Validated Results of the 38th General Election".
17. Assembly of First Nations, "National Aboriginal Leaders Call On Stephen Harper To Explain Position On Offensive Writings Of Tom Flanagan, Conservative Party Of Canada's National Campaign Chair," www.afn.ca/Media/2004/june/june_7_04.htm.
18. Statistics Canada, "2001 Federal Electoral District Profile".
19. For example, see Elections Canada, *Electoral Insight* Vol. 5, No. 3 (November 2003).



Women Beneath the Electoral Barrier

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In the 1980s, due to a variety of circumstances, Canadians witnessed a historic rise in the number of women elected to the Canadian House of Commons. While many of the same circumstances existed throughout the 1990s, there was little change in the membership of the House and therefore little opportunity for additional women to run for office. For the 2004 election, the political landscape in Canada had changed dramatically. Three of the four largest political parties had elected new leaders, two parties had merged to create the new Conservative Party of Canada, and the political finance provisions of the *Canada Elections Act* had received a complete overhaul. The shift opened up more opportunities for women to run. The critical step, however, was for more women to win the nominations of their parties. Despite the fact that most parties made efforts to identify and recruit more women, women made up only 23% of the nominated candidates of the four major parties. It was not surprising, therefore, that the number of women elected did not significantly increase.

Major progress in the 1980s

In the 1980 federal election, only 14 women were elected to the House of Commons, making up just 5% of the membership. By the close of that decade, the number of women elected had almost tripled to 39, or 13.2% of the 295 members of Parliament.² Several reasons were given to explain this large increase in the number of women elected. First, women had made inroads into the traditional recruitment grounds for candidates. Improved social and economic status meant that there were more women in law, business and local politics. Secondly, women inside and outside the parties were demanding better representation. Thirdly,

changes to the election financing rules at the federal level helped to break down some of the traditional barriers for women candidates. And finally, there was a relatively high rate of turnover among members of Parliament, which meant that there were more opportunities for women to be elected.³ In the next decade, many of the same conditions applied, except for the important difference that there was little turnover in the membership of the House during the next three elections and therefore fewer opportunities arose to elect additional women.

Progress in the 1990s stalls

In 1993, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Liberals won with a large majority and the number of women elected to the House of Commons increased to 53, or 18% of the 295 members of Parliament.⁴ Mr. Chrétien used his prerogative to appoint candidates to meet his stated goal of having women make up 25% of the Liberal candidates.⁵ In the federal elections of 1997 and 2000, the Liberals would go on to form two additional majority governments. The three majority governments created a decade of stability in the House of Commons and there was a much lower rate of turnover among members. Furthermore, Mr. Chrétien followed a general practice of protecting the nominations of Liberal incumbents, which further reduced the rate of turnover. The effect of the low turnover was evident between the 1997 and 2000 elections, when there was no change in the number of women elected. In both elections, 62 women were elected to the House of Commons, making up 20% of its members. The opportunity to increase the number of women elected appeared to have opened up in 2004, when the political landscape had changed significantly.

Toward the 2004 election

By the call of the 2004 federal election, there were three new leaders among the major parties, a new political party, new political finance provisions and a significant turnover in members. The previous year had seen the retirement of two political leaders who had served throughout the 1990s. Alexa McDonough retired as leader of the New Democratic Party and, for the first time in over a decade, a man, Jack Layton, was elected to lead the party. Jean Chrétien retired as both prime

a federal election. Many members of Parliament who had served through the 1990s made the decision to retire, thereby opening up ridings to the nomination of new candidates.⁶ In addition, Paul Martin decided not to follow his predecessor's practice of protecting the nominations of incumbents, which opened up further opportunities within the Liberal party for a competitive nomination process. The new political finance provisions, which had been adopted by Parliament in 2003, included contribution limits for individuals, corporations and unions, and

spending limits for nomination contestants, thereby reducing a key barrier for women, the ability to raise funds for an electoral campaign.

Many members of Parliament who had served through the 1990s made the decision to retire, thereby opening up ridings to the nomination of new candidates.

minister and leader of the Liberal party, and was replaced by Paul Martin. The Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties united under a new banner to form the Conservative party. Former Alliance leader Stephen Harper was elected to lead the new united party. Only Gilles Duceppe, leader of the Bloc Québécois, had previously led his political party through

Along with this significant movement in the political leadership and landscape, women continued to make social and economic gains that positioned them for possible recruitment as candidates. It remained to be seen how the parties and, in particular, the party leaders would respond to the challenge to elect more women. Equal Voice, a multi-partisan advocacy organization devoted

to promoting women's participation in Canadian politics, challenged all party leaders to take action to increase the number of women elected to the House of Commons. Specifically, Equal Voice had set a goal of 104 women members in 2004. This goal is premised on the belief that women need to make up approximately one third of the members of the House of Commons, if they are to have a significant and lasting impact on its proceedings.⁷

The support of the party leaders is critical to ensuring that more women will be nominated and subsequently elected to the House of Commons. In Canada, political parties are the key actors in the electoral process. Specifically, political parties recruit and nominate candidates for elected office through local riding associations.⁸ While the parties may differ in the degree to which the selection of candidates is left to the local riding association, the party apparatus is critical to the nomination process. Party leaders, in particular, can ensure that the party apparatus is open to recruiting and nominating more women. In the lead-up to the federal election of 2004, each of the four major parties took a different approach to the

Women in the House of Commons, by Party, 1980 to 2004

	1980	1984	1988	1993	1997	2000	2004
Liberal	10	5	13	36	37	39	34
Progressive Conservative	2	19	21	1	2	1	n/a
Reform/Canadian Alliance	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	4	7	n/a
Bloc Québécois	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	11	10	14
N.D.P.	2	3	5	1	8	5	5
Conservative*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	14	27	39	53	62	62	65

*Conservative refers to the new Conservative Party of Canada created in 2003 by the union of the former Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties.
Information: Parliament of Canada

recruitment of women, which led to varying degrees of success in nominating them for election.

The 2004 election

In 2003, while running for the leadership of the Liberal party, Paul Martin declared that he would undertake to increase the number of women candidates and to do so in “winnable ridings” through active recruitment for nominations; and if that did not work, to use his power to appoint candidates.⁹ He stated that his goal was to ensure that Liberal members and, indeed, the House of Commons were representative of the population at large and that he would like to see women make up 50% of the elected members.¹⁰ However, as the nomination process got underway, he also stated that he would not involve himself in the local affairs of riding associations. Moreover, he discontinued the practice of protecting the nominations of incumbents, thus opening up ridings for a competitive process.¹¹

The Liberals ended up nominating 75 women for election. This represented 24% of the full slate of 308 candidates that they fielded across Canada.¹² While the candidate selection process had

identified many more women who had both the interest and background to run, these women were not successful in winning the nominations. The party had an informal mentoring system that paired potential female nominees with successful women members. However, that was not enough to help women win more riding nominations.¹³ In previous elections, the Liberals had nominated an equal number of women, but then Liberal leader Jean Chrétien had used his prerogative of appointing candidates to reach 25%. In 2004, Paul Martin did not use his prerogative to specifically appoint more women as candidates. Instead, he used that prerogative primarily to appoint several high-profile candidates, most of whom were male.¹⁴ It is possible that if Paul Martin had appointed more women candidates, more women would have been elected. As it is, 34 out of 135 Liberal members elected, or 25% of their caucus, are women.¹⁵

The New Democratic Party also had a new leader in the 2004 federal election. What was highly significant, not only for the party but also for federal politics, is that for the first time in 15 years, the N.D.P. was not led by a woman. Since 1989, when Audrey McLaughlin

was elected leader of the N.D.P., followed by Alexa McDonough in 1995, the N.D.P. had provided female leadership in federal politics. The symbolic benefit of a female political leader for all women seeking federal office is significant. Not only does it demonstrate to potential female

Photo: CP (Fred Chartrand)



Audrey McLaughlin became the first female leader of a federal political party at the 1989 N.D.P. leadership convention in Winnipeg.

candidates that they can succeed and even lead in the federal political process, it also informs the political culture that women are capable of being elected. It helps to break down the psychological and cultural barriers that have traditionally limited women's involvement in politics.¹⁶

N.D.P. leader Jack Layton continued his party's practice of a formal affirmative action program. Initiated many years ago, the N.D.P. policy was to freeze nominations until the local riding association could demonstrate that a woman or another member of an under-represented group was in the running for nomination.¹⁷ Time, education and awareness have enabled this policy to ensure that women and other minorities are promoted for nomination.¹⁸ However, despite the formality of their recruitment, some N.D.P. women still faced difficulty in winning a nomination. In 2004, several high-profile women found themselves unprepared to manage the competitiveness of the nomination process successfully and they either lost or dropped out before the race began.¹⁹

Photo: The Toronto Star (Richard Lautens)



Dr. Ruby Dhalla (Liberal), who won the Brampton–Springdale (Ontario) riding, became the first Sikh woman member of Canada's House of Commons.



Photo: CP (Fred Chartrand)

The first husband-wife team elected to the House of Commons arrived when Nina Grewal (Fleetwood–Port Kells) joined her husband Gurmant (Newton–North Delta), who was first elected in 1997. On July 15, 2004, the two British Columbia Conservatives took the oath of office with Clerk of the House William Corbett (right).

The result was that 96 of the N.D.P. candidates (31%) were women.²⁰ Of the 19 members of Parliament elected from the N.D.P., 5 are women, representing 26% of the party's membership in the House.²¹

Only 21% of the members elected to the House of Commons in 2004 are women.

Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper shared with party leaders Paul Martin and Jack Layton the challenge of running his first federal election as leader, but he had the added task of introducing a new party to the electoral scene. The new party combined different views when it came to the representation of women. On the one hand, the former Progressive Conservative party had put in place certain measures aimed at encouraging women to become candidates – for example, the Ellen Fairclough fund. It had also elected Canada's first and only female prime minister, the Right

Honourable Kim Campbell. The former Canadian Alliance party, on the other hand, like its predecessor the Reform party, had always rejected affirmative action measures to encourage the nomination of women candidates.²²

Thus, when asked by Equal Voice what action he would take to promote the nomination of women, leader Stephen

Harper replied that he would leave it to the local riding associations. Furthermore, he noted that women in his party were successful due to their own hard work.²³ In the end, only 36 of the Conservative Party's 308 candidates (12%) were women,²⁴ while 12 of the 99 members elected from the Conservative Party are women.²⁵

Of the four party leaders discussed here, only the Bloc Québécois' Gilles Duceppe had previously led his party in a federal election. The party, which runs candidates only in the province of Quebec, has demonstrated a commitment to

nominating women. Beginning in 2003, the party actively sought to identify and recruit women for nomination. However, as experienced by the other parties, some of these women dropped out or failed to win nominations.²⁶ In 2004, 18 of the 75 Bloc candidates (24%) were women, a proportion that is slightly lower than among the Liberals and the N.D.P., which fielded candidates in all 308 ridings across Canada.²⁷ The election resulted in 14 women winning seats as part of the Bloc's 54-member caucus (or 26% of the total).²⁸

Conclusion

Together, the nomination processes of the four major parties led to 225 women being nominated out of a total of 999 candidates, or approximately 23%. The final electoral result was therefore predictable – only 21% of the members elected to the House of Commons in 2004 are women.²⁹ This is not a significant increase over the elections of 1997 and 2000, when women made up 20% of the elected members. The conditions that had been evident during the near tripling



Photo: The Gazette

Campaign signs in Laval, Quebec.

of the representation of women in the House of Commons in the 1980s still existed in 2004 and included changes in party leadership, the creation of a new party, the increased turnover of members and improved election financing rules. The Liberals, the N.D.P. and the Bloc all had formal and informal mechanisms to identify and recruit

potential women candidates, but the number of women nominated to run for elected office did not increase. It is evident, therefore, that women need additional support to compete for and obtain nominations. Party leaders are well positioned to provide that additional support, whether through changes to the party's

nomination process or by directly appointing candidates. The election of 2004 demonstrated that for women to make the breakthrough to that significant one third of the elected members of the House, commitment and determination from the party leaders, the party apparatus and women themselves will be required. ✕

NOTES

1. Nikki Macdonald provided electoral research for Equal Voice during the 2004 general election. Equal Voice is a multi-partisan advocacy organization that promotes the involvement of women in politics.
2. Women Candidates in General Elections – 1921 to Date, Parliament of Canada Web site: www.parl.gc.ca.
3. Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott, *Still Counting: Women in Politics Across Canada* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003), pp. 46–48.
4. Parliament of Canada Web site.
5. Sydney Sharpe, *The Gilded Ghetto: Women and Political Power in Canada*, 1st ed. (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishing Ltd., 1994), p. 173.
6. In 2004, 54 members chose not to seek re-election, in contrast with 2000, when 22 members chose not to seek re-election. Source: Electoral History, Parliament of Canada Web site.
7. See Equal Voice Web site, www.equalvoice.ca. Note: While the phrase “104 in 2004” made a catchy goal to communicate, it was premised on the desire to move closer towards one-third representation in the House. It has been noted that women need to make up 30% of the House of Commons to have a major, sustained influence (Sharpe, *The Gilded Ghetto*, p. 218).
8. Richard J. Van Loon and Michael S. Whittington, *The Canadian Political System: Environment, Structure and Process*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1981), pp. 304–325.
9. June 14, 2003, National Liberal Party Leadership Debate, televised.
10. Paul Martin's speech to National Women's Liberal Commission, National Liberal Leadership Convention, November 2003.
11. Brian Laghi and Campbell Clark, “Copps's Battle a Symptom of Liberal Infighting,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 17, 2004, p. A11.
12. Numbers provided by Liberal Party of Canada to Nikki Macdonald as part of research for Equal Voice, posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
13. Chair of Liberal Women's Caucus, Anita Neville, MP, in discussion with Nikki Macdonald, May and July 2004.
14. Refers to Paul Martin's appointment of several British Columbia candidates, including Ujjal Dosanjh, former N.D.P. premier of B.C., and David Emerson, formerly of Canfor, a forest products company based in Vancouver.
15. Party Standings, 2004, Parliament of Canada Web site.
16. For a discussion of the challenges women party leaders have faced in Canada, see Trimble and Arscott, pp. 69–99.
17. Reply of Jack Layton, N.D.P. leader, to Rosemary Speirs, Chair of Equal Voice, March 25, 2004. Posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
18. Nikki Macdonald in conversation with Judy Wasylycia-Leis, N.D.P. member of Parliament, April 29, 2004.
19. In conversation, Judy Wasylycia-Leis gave the example of Mary Woo-Sims, former B.C. ombudsman, who was defeated by Ian Waddell for the N.D.P. nomination in Vancouver Kingsway.
20. Numbers provided to Nikki Macdonald by the New Democratic Party. Posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
21. Party Standings 2004, Parliament of Canada.
22. For a useful discussion of the Reform/Canadian Alliance approach, see Lisa Young, “Representation of Women in the New Canadian Party System”, especially pages 191–196, in William Cross, ed., *Political Parties, Representation, and Electoral Democracy in Canada* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2002).
23. Reply of Stephen Harper, leader of Conservative Party, to Rosemary Speirs, Chair of Equal Voice, March 29, 2004, posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
24. Numbers provided to Nikki Macdonald by Conservative Party of Canada. Posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
25. Party Standings, Parliament of Canada.
26. Claude Potvin, official Bloc spokesperson, in conversation with Nikki Macdonald, June 23, 2004.
27. Numbers provided by Bloc Québécois to Nikki Macdonald. Posted on www.equalvoice.ca.
28. Party Standings, Parliament of Canada.
29. Party Standings, Parliament of Canada.



Opinion Polls and the Canada Elections Act

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“The public right to good, reliable information is unquestionably one of the cornerstones of our democratic societies.”¹ Recognition of this principle led Parliament, when amending the *Canada Elections Act* in 2000, to include a section on the publication of and access to methodological information about opinion polls published during an election period. In the Act adopted in February 2000, subsection 326(1) creates the obligation to publish, together with the poll results, the names of the polling organization and sponsor, the timing of the survey, the sample population, the number of people contacted and, *if applicable* (author’s emphasis²), the margin of error for the results presented. Subsection 326(2) requires publication of the wording of the survey questions and instructions on how the reader can obtain a report with additional methodological information. Subsection 326(3) describes the information that must be presented in that report: the sampling method and a variety of information about the sample, the response rate, the dates and time of day the interviews took place and the method used to adjust the data, particularly to account for non-responses (respondents not answering a specific question).

A little background

We should remember that there was no such section in the 1993 Act,³ despite the representations on this matter made before the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Lortie Commission). At that time, an analysis of the way polling methodology was described in the media⁴ had demonstrated serious shortcomings. The author noted in particular the lack of information on the response rate, the weighting or adjustment, and the size of

regional samples. Moreover, the wording of the questions was not always included. He proposed that the Act require the publication of a methodological insert with certain specific information. After the Act came into effect, Lachapelle analyzed the presentation of survey methodology during the 1993 election, and his conclusion is just as bleak as in 1991: “The methodological information required to judge the quality of a survey is often missing or obscured behind the mass of data provided.”⁵ During the 1997 federal election, Andersen “took up the torch” and analyzed the basic methodological information in all the articles presenting survey data. He found that 64% did not mention the polling period, 33%, the size of the sample, 25%, the margin of error, 21%, the wording of the question, and 14%, the proportion of undecided responses.⁶

After the enactment of the new legislation in 2000, Durand showed that the basic information required by subsection 326(1) is generally presented and subsection 326(2) concerning the publication of the wording of the question on voting intentions and the mention of the availability of a detailed report is generally respected.⁷ However, with a few exceptions, most of the information that should appear in the report provided by the polling organization (subsection 326(3)) is missing.

What about 2004?

During the campaign of May 23 to June 27, 2004, 17 national surveys were published in the national anglophone and francophone media (*The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *The National Post*, *La Presse*, *Le Journal de Montréal*,

The Gazette and Canadian Press). Four firms did the polling: Ipsos-Reid (7 polls), EKOS (4), Leger Marketing (4) and COMPAS (2). In addition, Environics published a poll on its Web site and SES Research published a series of polls for CPAC on its Web site – we chose four, to avoid redundancy.

Table 1 shows the level of media compliance with subsections 326(1) and 326(2). The 24 articles selected are those that presented the surveys for the first time. Some of the information required by subsection 326(1), such as the names of the polling organization and sponsor, the survey period, the total number of respondents and the margin of error for the

national sample, is now automatically presented by most media. The information provided on the margin of error – except in *The Globe and Mail* – is the maximum margin of error (at 50%) for the entire sample and not for the sample of people who indicated their voting intentions. However, non-response to the question on voting intention varies between 7% and 26%, substantially modifying the margin of error. The information on the sampled population is presented, but in very succinct form (adults, Canadians).

Regional voting intentions are presented in 18 of the 24 articles. The spirit of the Act calls for information

on the sample size and margin of error to be reported at the same time. With a few exceptions, neither the size of the regional samples nor the associated margin of error was reported. When they are included, they are reported only for Quebec (*Le Journal de Montréal* and an article in *La Presse*) or for Quebec and Ontario (an article in *La Presse*). A single article, on the SES Research site, gives the size of all the regional samples and the associated margins of error. Voting intentions in various regions were thus the subject of much media comment about the regional nature of party support, but with no possibility of learning the margin of error for the data.

Table 1
Media Compliance with Subsections 326(1) and 326(2) of the *Canada Elections Act*

Media	Number of articles	Information in subsection 326(1)							Subsection 326(2)		Other
		Polling firm (number of surveys)	Polling period	Sampled population	Number of respondents (National)	Margin of error (National)	Number of respondents (Regional)	Margin of error (Regional)	Wording of question	Information on access to reports	Insert on methodology
The Globe and Mail	7	Ipsos-Reid (7)	✓	Canadians (1/7) Adults (3/7) Not published (3/7)	✓ ¹	✓ ²	0/7	0/7	7/7	0/7	0/7
The National Post/The Gazette	3	COMPAS (2)	✓	Canadians (2/3) Not published (1/3)	✓	✓	0/2	0/2	1/3	0/3	0/3
La Presse/The Toronto Star³	5	EKOS (4)	✓	Canadians, 18+ (3/5) Canadians (1/5) 18+ (1/5)	✓	✓	2/3 ⁴	1/3 (Que.)	5/5	0/5	0/5
Le Journal de Montréal	3	Leger Marketing (3)	✓	Canadians (2/3)	✓ ⁵	✓	2/3 (Que.)	2/3 (Que.)	2/3	0/3	3/3
Canadian Press	1	Leger Marketing (1) ⁶	✓	Adults (1/1)	✓	✓	0/1	0/1	0/1	1/1	0/1
SES Research	4 ⁷	SES Research (4)	✓	Not published (4/4)	✓	✓	1/1	1/1	4/4	0/4	4/4
Environics	1	Environics (1)	✓	Adult Canadians (1/1)	✓ ⁸	✓	0/1	0/1	1/1	0/1	1/1

✓ = information present

¹ *The Globe and Mail* also systematically mentions the number of people who answered the question on voting intentions.

² *The Globe and Mail* also mentions the specific margin of error for the question on voting intentions in three of its articles.

³ Four articles in *La Presse* and only one in *The Toronto Star* were analyzed, since the articles in the two papers were equivalent.

⁴ One of the articles mentions the size of samples from Quebec and Ontario; the other mentions Quebec only.

⁵ *Le Journal de Montréal* also mentions in one of its articles the specific number of people who answered the question on voting intentions.

⁶ Name of survey sponsor not specified.

⁷ Four SES Research polls were chosen, one per week, to avoid overlapping samples.

⁸ Environics also mentions the number of respondents eligible to vote, that is, Canadian citizens aged 18 and over.

As for compliance with subsection 326(2), four out of 24 articles did not include the wording of the question and, unlike what happened in 2000, a single article, from the Canadian Press, informed readers of the availability of a detailed report and how to get it. During the 2000 election, most of the media referred readers to the polling firms' Web sites. Accordingly, we checked to see if those Web sites did post the information required by subsection 326(3). Table 2 shows the available information. The information normally presented bears on the sampling method, the proportion of non-disclosers or undecided respondents and the adjustment used. Leger Marketing and Environics do not specify the sampling method they use.

The information provided by the other firms is scanty: it does not indicate whether unlisted numbers are included in the sampling base or the selection method used within households. As for adjustment, two firms, SES Research and Environics, provide no information. EKOS does not explicitly mention the year of the census data used for reference, while Leger Marketing and COMPAS mention only that the data comes from Statistics Canada. The information on the response rate is normally missing,⁸ except for Leger Marketing's most recent survey. Only Leger Marketing (three out of four

surveys) and COMPAS (for a single survey) explicitly mention how cases of non-response are dealt with, and

Overall, the media respect the formal provisions of section 326 in their publications, except for mentioning the availability of a detailed report.

only SES Research mentions the time of day they conducted interviews.

Finally, with respect to regional voting intentions, the proportion of non-responses within the samples is presented for the most recent surveys done by Ipsos-Reid, COMPAS, SES Research (undecided responses only)

Table 2
Polling Firm Compliance with Subsection 326(3)

Pollster	Sampling method	Initial sample size	Response rate	Refusals and eligibility	Time of day of interviews	% of non-responses/ % undecided	Treatment of non-responses	Weighting and adjustments
Ipsos-Reid 7 surveys	Random representative sample (6/7) Random sample (1/7)	–	–	–	–	Non-responses 7/7 Undecided 7/7	–	Region, age, sex (4/4)
COMPAS 2 surveys	Representative national sample (1/2) Representative sample (1/2)	–	–	–	–	Non-responses 2/2 Undecided 1/2	1/2	Region, age, sex (1/2) ¹
EKOS 4 surveys	Random sample (2/4) Random stratified sample (1/4) Panel (1/4) ²	–	–	–	–	Non-responses 4/4 Undecided and refused 3/4	–	Region, age, sex (4/4) ³
Leger Marketing 4 surveys	–	–	1/4	–	–	Non-responses 4/4 Undecided 4/4	3/4	Age, sex, mother tongue (3/4) ⁴ Sex, mother tongue and region (1/4)
SES Research 4 surveys	Random sample	–	–	–	Evening	Non-responses 3/4 Undecided 4/4	–	–
Environics 1 survey	–	–	–	–	–	Non-responses 0/1 Undecided 1/1	–	–

– = no information available

¹ Report mentions that the data come from Statistics Canada, without specifying the exact source.

² Panel consists of follow-up interviews with all the poll respondents, June 7 to 9.

³ Report does not mention the year of the census data used.

⁴ Report mentions that the data come from Statistics Canada, without specifying the source.

and Leger Marketing, but not for the earlier polls.

The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that, overall, the media respect the formal provisions of section 326 in their publications, except for mentioning the availability of a detailed report. However, the information related to the response rate required in the reports normally provided by the polling organizations⁹ is notably absent, with one exception. Moreover, the information available is sometimes scanty and the basic information needed to judge regional voting intentions is very often absent.

Looking at the general quality of the published information, two points deserve mention. One, it is sometimes very difficult to find the methodological information in articles. It can even be presented as a comment by the pollster. Only *Le Journal de Montréal*, SES Research and Environics present the methodology separately in an insert. Two, Lachapelle

was already pointing out, in 1991, the poor quality of the graphics illustrating changes in voting intentions. That situation has not improved. None of the graphics illustrating changes in voting

equidistant. This type of graphic gives a false picture of the trends in voting intentions and can mislead the reader.

In conclusion

Although the situation is not catastrophic, Elections Canada could help make life easier for everyone – the media, pollsters, readers and experts – by reminding the media of the provisions of the Act during the next election and offering a model presentation, such as an insert on methodology for

publication purposes and a model report for the polling firms.

It would also be a good idea to specify that the basic information must be presented for all the voting intentions indicated, including voting intentions by region. The Act could, moreover, be amended to require that information on undecided respondents, which is essential, be presented in the articles rather than in the detailed reports. Finally, the media should work on improving the graphic presentation of trends in voting intentions, which is clearly deficient. ❌



intentions, over whatever time span – the campaign, a few months, since the last election – respect the timeline. Thus, the points representing voting intentions in June 2000, in January 2004, in April 2004 and in three surveys done in May 2004 may all be

NOTES

1. Guy Lachapelle, "La réglementation des sondages au Canada et l'élection de 1993," *Revue québécoise de science politique* No. 27 (Spring 1993), pp. 175–201.
2. This probably refers to the fact that, theoretically, the margin of error applies only to strictly random samples, as opposed to quota-based samples.
3. The 1993 Act provided for a ban on the publication of opinion survey results during the final three days of the election period.
4. Guy Lachapelle, *Polls and the Media in Canadian Elections: Taking the Pulse*, Vol. 16 of *The Collected Research Studies*, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), 182 p.
5. Lachapelle, "La réglementation des sondages au Canada et l'élection de 1993," p. 182.
6. Robert M. Andersen, "Reporting Public Opinion Polls: The Media and the 1997 Canadian Election," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 285–298.
7. Claire Durand, "The 2000 Canadian Election and Poll Reporting under the New Elections Act," *Canadian Public Policy* Vol. 28, No. 4 (2002), pp. 539–545.
8. The paper *La Presse* tried to understand why there were noticeable differences in the results of two polls it had commissioned from EKOS and CROP. Reporter Denis Lessard ("Les écarts entre les sondages," *La Presse*, June 12, 2004, p. A34) thus obtained and published the response rates for these polls, suggesting a difference between the rates as a possible explanation for the differing results. After that, the response rate for the CROP poll done in Quebec only was also published.
9. Strictly speaking, however, it is the media's responsibility to see that the information is available.



Bill C-24

Replacing the Market with the State?

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Until recently, the governing party in Ottawa has typically enjoyed generous funding from corporate Canada. Such a circumstance may have been considered democratically unconscionable by many, but governments have been disinclined to tamper with a financing regime from which they have undeniably profited. In the first half of 2003, however, the Chrétien government pushed Bill C-24 through both houses of Parliament. The *Canada Elections Act* was thus amended to, among other things, cap trade union and corporate contributions to riding associations and candidates at one thousand dollars, provide for more generous reimbursement of election expenses to parties and candidates, and extend regulatory control over leadership conventions, nomination contests and riding associations. Most important, for the purposes of this article, is that any political party receiving more than 2% of the national popular vote (or more than 5% in those constituencies it contested) would be entitled to allowances from the public treasury equivalent to \$1.75 per year for every vote received in the preceding general election. This article will focus upon some of the implications of this formula; for at least some parties, this particular form of state subsidy will not dramatically alter the relative distribution of resources previously allocated by the market.

Using public monies to support political parties is not a revolutionary idea, either in Canada or abroad. As far back as the mid-1960s, the House of Commons Committee on Election Expenses (dubbed the Barbeau Committee) noted that some countries subsidized particular activities of parties (transportation in Japan, broadcast time and mailings in

Britain and France, nomination conventions in Norway),¹ while other jurisdictions (West Germany, Sweden, Puerto Rico) provided parties with unconditional subsidies based on the votes or seats won in the preceding election.² The Barbeau Committee regarded the latter approach as debilitating to party organizations and recommended against its adoption in Canada. Twenty-five years later, the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Lortie Commission) moved only incrementally from this position. Although three provinces (Quebec in 1977, New Brunswick in 1978, and Prince Edward Island in 1983) had, in the interim, directed annual subsidies from the public treasury to eligible parties,³ the Lortie Commission suggested only that registered parties receiving over 1% of the popular vote at a general election be entitled to a one-time reimbursement of 60¢ for each vote received (provided that amount did not exceed 50% of actual expenses incurred).⁴ Even this relatively modest recommendation, like much of the Lortie Report, lay fallow for over a decade.

The debate over public subsidies

This circumstance changed abruptly in the spring of 2003. Developed in the midst of revelations about possible misuse of public funds on government advertising and the governing party's fractious leadership politics, Bill C-24 promised to revolutionize the financing of Canada's national parties. With respect to providing an annual subsidy to eligible parties, the government offered three specific justifications. First, if parties were to be denied their customary access to large corporate and union donations, the state should

provide appropriate compensation for these lost revenues. Second, the government averred that replacing private with public dollars would lessen the likelihood that monied interests would exert undue influence over the policy-making process. Finally, a guaranteed quarterly allowance would free parties from the yoke of perpetual fundraising and permit them to engage in other, more socially beneficial, activities.

Needless to say, not everyone was impressed by these arguments. Spokespersons for smaller parties, for example, complained that the 2% popular vote requirement was certainly discriminatory and perhaps unconstitutional. As well, opposition MPs claimed that the bill obliged taxpayers to support parties with which they had little sympathy, that voters might, in protest, opt out of the electoral process entirely, that a heavy reliance on state funding would undercut the links between political parties and the sectors of society they purported to represent, and that basing the allowance on votes received at the preceding general elections was unfairly tilted against minor or fledgling political movements, and unfairly generous to national governments. One MP worried about Bill C-24 precipitating a “closed shop,”⁵ while another suggested that the legislation could more appropriately be labelled “the incumbent’s protection act.”⁶

Previous patterns of party financing

These objections merit closer scrutiny. To what extent will state subsidies revolutionize the allocation of resources to registered Canadian political parties? Put differently, was the more market-based system of the past not implicitly shaped by the results of the previous federal election? Table 1, which displays

non-election year ratios⁷ derived from dividing a party’s share of the major parties’ annual revenues by their share of the major parties’ votes in the preceding general election, provides an initial insight into the matter. Thus, a figure of 1.00 in

Table 1 would indicate that a party was raising monies commensurate with its share of the popular vote in the preceding election. Since 1993, when the number of parties with seats in

Parliament rose to five, three parties (the Liberals, the Progressive Conservatives, and Reform/Canadian

To what extent will state subsidies revolutionize the allocation of resources to registered Canadian political parties?

Alliance) have gathered revenues that have been approximately proportionate to their popular vote totals from the previous election; in fact, their mean figures have been 0.97, 1.04 and 0.85

Table 1
Ratio of Annual Revenue Share to Vote Share in Preceding Election (Non-election years only; major parties only)

	Liberal	Progressive Conservative	N.D.P.	Bloc Québécois	Reform/ Alliance
2002	0.95	0.81	1.82	0.25	1.21
2001	0.96	2.05	1.86	0.26	0.59
2000	–	–	–	–	–
1999	1.11	0.80	1.71	0.35	0.94
1998	1.11	0.96	1.58	0.21	0.93
1997	–	–	–	–	–
1996	0.99	0.98	4.07	0.20	0.90
1995	0.83	0.90	4.63	0.32	0.60
1994	0.84	0.76	4.28	0.45	0.75
1993	–	–	–	–	–
1992	0.86	0.98	1.26	–	–
1991	0.73	0.97	1.49	–	–
1990	1.16	0.79	1.19	–	–
1989	0.69	1.12	1.23	–	–
1988	–	–	–	–	–
1987	0.89	0.73	1.88	–	–
1986	0.90	0.73	1.84	–	–
1985	0.68	0.93	1.67	–	–
1984	–	–	–	–	–
1983	0.54	1.41	1.36	–	–
1982	0.66	1.13	1.55	–	–
1981	0.66	1.12	1.58	–	–
1980	–	–	–	–	–
1979	–	–	–	–	–
1978	0.75	0.99	1.74	–	–
1977	0.84	0.84	1.80	–	–
1975/1976	0.76	0.84	2.02	–	–

respectively. Going back to the 1970s and 1980s alters the revenue-to-vote relationships only marginally.

Admittedly, the Liberal party was slower than their competitors to realize the monies that could be raised from direct-mail and telephone campaigns; thus, their mean revenue-to-vote ratio for the 1975–1992 period was only 0.78:1. The corresponding figure for the Progressive Conservatives, however, was an almost proportionate 0.97:1. In fact, it seems likely that even as far back as the period of the 1930s to the 1950s, revenues raised by the major parties closely tracked vote totals from the preceding general election. While he lacked hard data to prove it, K. Z. Paltiel argued that corporate contributors from this era “hedged their bets by distributing their gifts in a proportion of sixty to forty between the incumbent and opposition parties.”⁸ As it turns out, the ratio of government party votes to the principal opposition party’s votes for the eight general elections held between 1930 and 1958 was 59:41.⁹

In light of this evidence, it is worth recalling that Alliance leader Stephen

Harper repeatedly claimed that the Liberal Party of Canada was the “principal

(in addition to their election rebates) is approximately 70% of their cumulative incomes for 2002 – then the Liberals may well end up enjoying a proportionate slice of a much larger revenue pie.

In some respects, it is the two outliers in Table 1 that are more interesting. On the one hand, there is the New Democratic Party, which in every

non-election year since 1974 has enjoyed a revenue portion greater than their vote share from the preceding general election. Nevertheless, the New Democratic Party only advanced a few minor quibbles during the parliamentary debates over Bill C-24. As leader

Alexa McDonough suggested before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, her caucus members supported the principle of the legislation, and “in the main, support the substance of it.”¹³ At the other extreme is the Bloc Québécois: its revenue share has never even approached half of its vote share in the previous election. For this party, Bill C-24 promised to be a windfall, and their enthusiasm for the legislation was unconstrained. In the words of MP Antoine Dubé: “I am always pleased to rise to speak in this House, but today even more than usual, because this government bill is, in a way, almost a gift to us Quebecers. It is truly an unexpected surprise.”¹⁴

The 2004 election and beyond

Did the public financing provisions of Bill C-24 have any influence on the recent federal election? As it turned out, none of the four major parties was financially constrained by the new regulatory

Photo: Randy Harquail



The public financing provisions of Bill C-24 have significantly benefited the Bloc Québécois and Green parties.

Photo: Wayne Broun



beneficiary” of Bill C-24;¹⁰ more colourfully, Alliance

backbencher John Williams alleged that the public subsidies would result in the “permanent entrenchment of Liberal hegemonic power.”¹¹ Yet Table 1 suggests that the Liberals were already bringing in revenues roughly proportionate to the proposed public subsidies. Two caveats must be registered here. First, the analysis does not speak to whether, relative to

their competitors, the share of pre-2004 Liberal revenues that would be disqualified under Bill C-24 is disproportionately high or disproportionately low.¹² Second, if state funding is particularly generous – and the \$22 million in allowances, which the five major parties received in 2004

Photo: Wayne Broun



Campaign signs in the electoral district of Ottawa–Orléans.

regime. Realizing that certain donors would be effectively off-limits as of January 1, 2004, all parties ramped up their fundraising efforts in the fall of 2003. Having given the old system “a lucrative farewell squeeze,”¹⁵ the parties then turned to the new system for their designated allowances (\$9.2 million to the Liberals, \$8.5 million to the Conservatives, \$2.4 million to the Bloc Québécois, and \$1.9 million to the N.D.P.). And since the 2004 cheques were paid in a single lump sum, rather than in the quarterly instalments that will be sent in future years, all the parties were relatively flush entering the summer campaign. In this light, and given that C-24 provides some incentives for parties to increase their mobilization efforts even in constituencies where they are relatively uncompetitive,¹⁶ it is not surprising that three parties spent near their expenditure limits, while the NDP spent just over two thirds of its limit.¹⁷

Ultimately, the greatest impact of Bill C-24 on the 2004 election was felt in an unlikely place. In the 2000 general election, the Green Party ran

Photo: Wayne Brown



Centre Block, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa

establish the Green Party of Canada.”¹⁹ As it turns out, the Green Party secured 4.3% of the national popular vote in June and is now eligible to receive approximately one million dollars annually from the federal treasury. Jubilant party officials declared that they planned to use the money to establish provincial Green parties,²⁰ hire full-time staff, upgrade the party’s Web site, and pay party leader Jim Harris a full-time salary.²¹

As the Greens’ breakthrough makes clear, it is difficult to predict with certainty the manner in which both parties and voters will

respond to the new regulatory environment created by Bill C-24. Perhaps parties, flush with public monies, will be less vigorous in pursuing the private donations that remain lawful. Perhaps voters, feeling in some sense that they have already “given at the office,” will be less inclined to favour any solicitations which do come their way. Certainly, one veteran Liberal fundraiser has recently acknowledged that post-election fundraising “has

been slower than we would have liked,” while former Liberal party president Stephen LeDrew, who initially condemned Bill C-24 as “dumb as a bag of hammers,” now opines that the legislation is “even sillier than I thought it was.”²² Yet should the state effectively displace the market as the source of political party revenues (at least in non-election years), it seems undeniable that the federal New Democratic Party, in particular, has much to lose. Recall that their share of revenues from private sources has consistently exceeded their share of the popular vote in the preceding general election. A pre-eminent state funding scheme based on the principles established in Bill C-24 would obviously prevent such an anomaly. Moreover, the legislation has already helped to establish a potentially dangerous competitor. After all, Green and New Democratic candidates troll in similar electoral waters, a circumstance which partly explains Jack Layton’s eagerness last June to trumpet the fact that both Greenpeace and the Sierra Club had deemed his party’s platform to be the most environmentally friendly.²³ Ultimately, the N.D.P. won only 19 seats in the last federal election.

Did the public financing provisions of Bill C-24 have any influence on the recent federal election?

111 candidates and tallied 0.8% of the national popular vote. Far from creating a “closed shop,” however, the provisions of Bill C-24 spurred the Greens to contest all 308 ridings in 2004, so as to reach more easily the 2% national threshold.¹⁸ In fact, one Green candidate in New Brunswick concluded an appeal for voter support this way: “Under the *Elections Act*, any party receiving two per cent of the vote earns \$1.75 per vote. Your vote can help

But in 16 other ridings (9 in British Columbia, 4 in Ontario, 2 in Saskatchewan, and 1 in the Northwest Territories), the combined total of Green and N.D.P. votes exceeded the winner's tally. Canadian political

discourse over the past decade has been dominated by the concern to "Unite the Right." Perhaps Bill C-24 will precipitate a similar debate over over the next decade to "Unite the Left." ✕

NOTES

1. *Report of the Committee on Election Expenses* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), pp. 175–180.
2. *Report of the Committee on Election Expenses*, pp. 203–222.
3. Peter P. Constantinou, "Public Funding of Political Parties, Candidates and Elections in Canada," in F. Leslie Seidle, ed., *Issues in Party and Election Finance in Canada*, Vol. 5 of *The Collected Research Studies*, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), pp. 246–258.
4. Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, *Final Report*, Vol. 3, *Reforming Electoral Democracy: Proposed Legislation* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991), pp. 154–156.
5. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons of Canada (Hansard)*, 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, Number 115, June 10, 2003, www.parl.gc.ca/common/Chamber_House_Debates_load.asp?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2&Dte=115_2003-06-10-E.
6. Jim Brown, "Squabble over Party Funding Escalates," *The Chronicle Herald* [Halifax], June 7, 2003, p. B5.
7. Table 1 focuses on non-election years because generous public subsidies were already a feature of political party financing during election years.
8. K. Z. Paltiel, *Political Party Financing in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 10.
9. Obviously, there is an arbitrary component to the selection of a particular panel of federal elections as representative of party financing from the 1930s to the 1950s. Confining our attention only to the six elections between 1930 and 1953 produces a government-opposition vote ratio of 60.4:39.6, while widening the panel to include contests on either end of the 1930–1958 period generates greater discrepancies from the 60:40 split.
10. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons of Canada (Hansard)*, 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, Number 057, February 11, 2003, www.parl.gc.ca/common/Chamber_House_Debates_load.asp?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2&Dte=057_2003-02-11-E.
11. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons of Canada (Hansard)*, 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, Number 062, February 18, 2003, www.parl.gc.ca/common/Chamber_House_Debates_load.asp?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2&Dte=062_2003-02-18-E.
12. See, for example, "Does Money Still Talk?," *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 13, 2004, pp. B1–B2.
13. Canada, Parliament, Senate, Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs*, Issue 13, June 17, 2003, www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/lega-e/13eva-e.htm?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2&comm_id=11.
14. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons of Canada (Hansard)*, 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, Number 058, February 12, 2003, www.parl.gc.ca/common/Chamber_House_Debates_load.asp?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2&Dte=058_2003-02-12-E.
15. Hubert Bauch, "Parties Are Awash in Campaign Money," *The Gazette* [Montréal], May 25, 2004, p. A13.
16. Arthur Drache, "Getting out the Vote Is Money in the Bank," *The National Post*, June 22, 2004, p. IN3.
17. The election expenses reports of the registered political parties are available at www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=pol&document=index&dir=exp2004&lang=e&textonly=false.
18. Jennifer Stewart, "Greens Get 3.3% of N.S. Votes," *The Chronicle Herald* [Halifax], June 30, 2004, p. C6.
19. Karin Bach, "Every Vote Will Help Build Green Party," *Saint John Telegraph-Journal*, June 23, 2004, p. A8.
20. Ruth Davenport, "Green Party Gains Votes, Will Shift Focus to Province," *The Daily News* [Halifax], June 29, 2004, p. 8.
21. Amy Carmichael, "Two-per-cent Victory Looms for Greens," *The Chronicle Herald* [Halifax], June 28, 2004, p. A3.
22. Joan Bryden, "New Law Hurt Grits' Financing," *The Sunday Herald* [Halifax], July 11, 2004, p. A1.
23. See, for example, "NDP Greener than Greens on Issues, Environmentalists Say," *The Daily News* [Halifax], June 17, 2004, p. 11.



Making Votes Count

How Well Did Our Electoral System Perform?

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Over the past decade, an active debate has evolved in Canada about the desirability of electoral reform. While the issue is not new to Canadian academic interest, it took on greater currency following the 1993 election, which produced a highly distorted and regionalized Parliament.¹ This distortion persisted to some extent in the two following elections, with the Liberals in 1997 forming a majority government with only 38.5% of the total vote and in 2000 with 41%. In all three instances, critics of our first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system called attention to some of the negative effects on Canadian democracy that seemed traceable to the electoral system – regional distortion, wasted votes, under-representation of the diversity of Canadian society, and declining competitiveness among Canadian political parties, to mention only a few.² The electoral system may also be implicated in the declining voter turnout for recent elections, since Canadians may not be motivated to go to the polls if they feel that their votes do not really “count” under the current system.³ In early 2004, the Law Commission of Canada tabled its report on electoral reform, in which it recommended that Canada replace the current electoral system with a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system similar to that used in Germany and New Zealand.⁴ In making its recommendation, the Law Commission stated:

“... a growing number of Canadians are no longer satisfied with our current electoral system. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the current electoral system no longer responds to 21st century Canadian democratic values ... Many Canadians desire an electoral system

that better reflects the society in which they live – one that includes a broader diversity of ideas and is more representative of Canadian society.”⁵

The 2004 election results and the case for electoral reform

The recent federal election provides us with the opportunity to re-examine some of the elements of this debate with new evidence. On the surface, the result of the 2004 federal election was quite different from those of the previous three mentioned above. From the beginning, the 2004 contest was more competitive, the outcome remaining in doubt until the very end. The election produced a minority government, rather than a majority one – the Liberals’ 37% of the popular vote translated into only 135 of the 308 parliamentary seats. Regional distortion appeared less extreme than previously, as the new Conservative Party won 24 seats in Ontario (in contrast to 2 won by the Canadian Alliance in the 2000 election), and the Liberals improved their representation in British Columbia (8 seats, compared to 5 in the 2000 election). The question thus arises: has the result of this election weakened the case for electoral reform? Is it possible that our electoral system performed better than expected in the recent election, and that some of the pressures to reform it will begin to abate? In this article, I will examine the 2004 election results in light of the arguments that have been advanced in favour of electoral reform, applying some of the tests that have been used on previous election results in Canada and in other countries to measure the degree of representative distortion

in the new Parliament in comparison with those of the recent past.⁶

A common method for measuring the representativeness of an electoral system in terms of the political parties is to compare the proportion of seats won by each party with the proportion of the votes that it received. A party that received, for example, 20% of the votes but only 10% of the seats would be said to be *under-represented* by 10% according to this measure, while a party that obtained 25% of the seats with the same proportion of votes would be *overrepresented* by 5%. A summary measure created by totalling these discrepancies in the proportion of seats and votes is called the *Index of*

Disproportionality.⁷ A value of this Index close to zero indicates a perfect fit between seats and votes. Higher values suggest greater distortion of a party's representation in comparison with the intentions of voters.

Table 1 makes this calculation for five political parties that fielded candidates in the 2004 election, comparing these results with similar calculations for federal elections back to 1980. Overall, the electoral system did perform slightly better in 2004 than in the three previous elections, but many of the distortions that have been

evident since 1993 continued to exist. Some have even worsened. On the

The electoral system did perform slightly better in 2004 than in the three previous elections, but many of the distortions that have been evident since 1993 continued to exist.

positive side, Liberal overrepresentation was substantially less in 2004 than previously – the difference in the Liberal share of seats over votes dropping to 7% from 16%. The new Conservative Party performed more or less in line with its share of the vote, obtaining 2% more seats than it deserved, compared with a modest degree of

Table 1
Disproportionality of Seats and Votes in Canadian Federal Elections: 1980–2004

		2004	2000	1997	1993	1988	1984	1980
Total seats		308	301	301	295	295	282	282
Liberal	% votes	37	41	38	41	32	28	44
	% seats	44	57	51	60	28	14	52
	Difference	7	16	13	19	-4	-14	8
Conservative	% votes	30						
	% seats	32						
	Difference	2						
Reform/Canadian Alliance	% votes		26	19	19			
	% seats		22	20	18			
	Difference		-4	1	-1			
Progressive Conservative	% votes		12	19	16	43	50	33
	% seats		4	7	1	58	75	37
	Difference		-8	-12	-15	15	25	4
New Democratic Party	% votes	16	9	11	7	20	19	20
	% seats	6	4	7	2	15	11	11
	Difference	-10	-5	-4	-5	-5	-8	-9
Bloc Québécois	% votes	12	11	11	14			
	% seats	18	13	15	18			
	Difference	6	2	4	4			
Green Party	% votes	4						
	% seats	0						
	Difference	-4						
Index of Disproportionality		15	18	17	22	12	24	11

under-representation for one of its predecessor parties (Canadian Alliance) and a more serious problem of under-representation for the other (Progressive Conservative) in 2000. The negative aspects of the electoral system come through more clearly in the showing of the other parties. The New Democratic Party (N.D.P.) continues to be severely disadvantaged by the FPTP system: it won only 6% of the seats in this Parliament, although it obtained 16% of the vote. The Bloc Québécois, on the other hand, continues to be over-represented, simply due to the regional concentration of its vote. The Green Party, in spite of fielding candidates in all 308 constituencies and obtaining 4% of the national vote, failed to win a seat. Notwithstanding a slightly better overall performance in 2004, there is little in these results to suggest that the problems associated with the FPTP electoral system in Canada have receded in any significant way.

The failure of the electoral system to accurately reflect the votes of Canadians becomes more evident when the 2004 results are examined by region (Table 2). Here, I report only the summary Index of Disproportionality, which is easily compared across regions, with a value calculated for previous elections. The national improvement in the performance of the electoral system in terms of seats and votes is entirely attributable to Ontario, where the new Conservatives succeeded in winning 23% of the province's seats with 32% of the vote, still a net under-representation of 9%. The N.D.P., likewise, continues to be seriously under-represented in Ontario (–11%), a position even worse than its showing in 2000 (–7%). It is only the partial correction of Liberal overrepresentation that accounts for the province's improved electoral performance in

2004 General Election Seat Results by Region

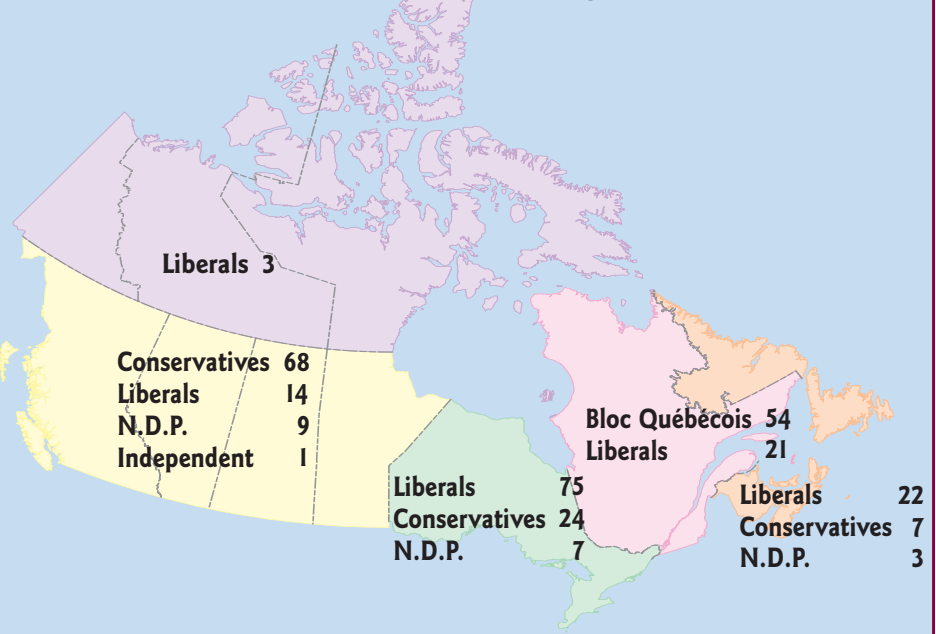


Table 2
Index of Disproportionality, by Region: 1980–2004*

	2004	2000	1997	1993	1988	1984	1980
Atlantic	25	18	9	39	16	25	17
Quebec	23	11	20	23	30	24	29
Ontario	26	47	48	40	18	13	24
West	28	22	25	20	19	20	21
Canada	15	18	17	22	12	24	11

*Regional calculations are for the same sets of parties in each election as shown in Table 1.

2004. But the Liberals, nevertheless, continue to be overrepresented in Ontario by a substantial 26%, having won 71% of the province's seats with only 45% of its vote.

In all other parts of the country, the performance of the electoral system was actually worse in 2004 than in 2000, in large part because of the dominance of single parties in a particular region. In the West, the Conservatives are wildly overrepresented, as was the Canadian Alliance in the previous election and before that, the Reform Party. In 2004, the Conservatives won 74% of western

seats with only 45% of the vote. In Quebec, the electoral system favours the Bloc Québécois, which won 72% of Quebec's seats in 2004 with 49% of the vote. In the Atlantic provinces, it was the Liberals that gained the advantage, obtaining 69% of the seats in that region with 44% of the vote in 2004 – a net overrepresentation in Parliament of 25%. Nearly all of these patterns are continuations of the types of distortions found in the previous three elections, the effect being a Parliament that is much more regionalized than it should be, or than is healthy in a country in which representation of diverse interests is so important.

Table 3
Index of Disproportionality for Selected Countries
(most recent election)

	Britain 2001	Canada 2004	Australia 2001	Germany 2002	Sweden 2002
Total seats	659	308	150	603	349
Index	20	15	13	5	2
Turnout (%)	59.4	60.9	95.4	79.1	80.1
Electoral system*	FPTP	FPTP	AV	MMP	PR

*FPTP = First past the post
AV = Alternative vote

MMP = Mixed-member proportional
PR = Proportional representation

The consequences of electoral distortion

The consequences of these distortions caused by the FPTP electoral system in Canada are important ones. Minority voices are muted or, in some cases, shut out entirely. Parties that concentrate their votes in a single province or geographic area are rewarded, while those that appeal to voters nationally are systematically disadvantaged. Were the allocation of seats truly

minds of voters they clearly are. On the same basis, the Liberals would have an additional 11 seats in the West and the N.D.P. another 9, thereby more accurately reflecting the actual votes cast by citizens in that region of the country. Instead, we have a Parliament in which, once again, the new Conservatives will claim a mandate to speak for the West, the Bloc

for Quebec, and the Liberals for the rest of the country, even though none of these parties obtained a majority of the votes in the region where they dominate. In all three instances, the majority of voters who did *not* cast their ballots for the dominant party in a region will rightly tend to feel that their views are not

properly represented. As Alan Cairns noted more than 35 years ago, the electoral system in Canada continues to magnify the regional and linguistic divisions of the country, rather than providing a means to address them.⁸

Proportional systems also tend, in general, to have higher voter turnout, although this varies considerably from one case to another.

for all or part of their parliamentary seats do much better, because the system itself guarantees a better fit between seats and votes in those two countries. Voters in such systems are far less likely to feel that their votes are “wasted”, as tends to be the case in many constituencies in Canada and in Britain. Proportional systems also tend, in general, to have higher voter turnout, although this varies considerably from one case to another, since there are other factors that can affect voter turnout above and beyond the system of representation.¹⁰

An idea whose time has come

What might we conclude from this preliminary examination of the 2004 election results in the context of the ongoing electoral reform debate? It is clear that the issue of electoral reform will continue to be widely discussed in Canada in any event, since there is already considerable momentum

Photo: Randy Harquail



Some countries with proportional representation systems tend to have higher voter turnout than Canada does, although the system of representation is only one of the factors affecting participation.

proportional to votes cast on a regional basis, the new Conservatives would have obtained 7 seats in Quebec and the N.D.P. 4, and both parties would be better able to portray themselves as truly national entities, which in the

behind the reform movement. Although the 2004 election was a closer contest, the outcome more uncertain, and the result a minority government, there is little in the outcome that might slow the movement towards reform of an electoral

system that remains desperately in need of change. All of the problems of representation that have been evident in the last four elections continue to plague our political system, and to undermine the quality of our democracy. Electoral reform is an idea whose time

has clearly come in Canada, as it did in New Zealand in the early 1990s. In the end, the outcome of the most recent election is more likely to advance the cause of reform than to hinder it. ✕

NOTES

1. Among the earlier sources on this topic, see William P. Irvine, *Does Canada Need a New Electoral System?* (Kingston, Ontario: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, 1979) and Alan C. Cairns, "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada, 1921–1965," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. I, No. 1 (March 1968), pp. 55–80.
2. See, for example, Henry Milner, "The Case for Proportional Representation in Canada," and Donley Studlar, "Will Canada Seriously Consider Electoral System Reform? Women and Aborigines Should," both in Henry Milner, ed., *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 1999), pp. 37–49 and pp. 123–132. See also Nick Loenen, *Citizenship and Democracy: a Case for Proportional Representation* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997).
3. On the turnout decline in recent elections, see André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte, *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 45–63; and Jon H. Pammett, "The People's Verdict," in Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 2000*, Chapter 13 (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001), pp. 293–317.
4. New Zealand reformed its electoral system in 1993, following an extended national debate and two referendums. On the performance of the MMP electoral system in New Zealand, see Jack Vowles, "Introducing Proportional Representation: the New Zealand Experience," *Parliamentary Affairs* Vol. 53 (2000), pp. 680–696.
5. Law Commission of Canada, *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Public Works and Government Services, 2004), p. 172.
6. For further discussion of some of the issues surrounding electoral reform in Canada, including analyses of the 1993 and 1997 elections and comparisons with other countries, see Milner, *Making Every Vote Count*. See also Leslie Seidle, "The Canadian Electoral System and Proposals for Reform," in A. Brian Tanguay and Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Parties in Transition*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996), pp. 282–306.
7. The Index is created by summing the absolute differences between the proportion of seats and votes obtained by the parties and dividing by two. The calculation here is for the five largest parties (in total votes obtained) for each election, and figures shown in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole number. See Michael Gallagher, "Proportionality, Disproportionality and Electoral Systems," *Electoral Studies* Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 1991), pp. 33–51.
8. Cairns, "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada, 1921–1965," p. 66.
9. Although Australia also has single-member districts, it permits voters to order the candidates on the ballot according to preference and then counts these "second choice" votes to determine a winner in constituencies where no candidate has obtained a majority of the votes cast. Thus, although minorities are not necessarily any better represented in Australia than in Canada, the two systems are not really comparable in terms of the effectiveness of individual votes.
10. Australia has compulsory voting, accounting for the higher turnout in that case. On the issue of turnout and electoral systems more generally, see Mark N. Franklin, "The Dynamics of Electoral Participation," in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris, eds., *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), pp. 148–168.



A Mixed-Member Proportional System Applied to the 2004 Election

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In this article, I look at certain aspects of the results of the June 2004 Canadian federal election and reflect on the possible effects if Canada were to adopt a different electoral system. Changes to the electoral system could have an impact, first on the representation of political parties, nationally and regionally; second, on the representation of women; and third, on voter turnout, especially that of young people. Given that the 2004 election was the most competitive for many years, yet saw a further drop in turnout, the last is an issue we cannot ignore.

The question of a new electoral system is also pertinent because electoral system reform is on the agenda of British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Yukon.¹ Meanwhile, Parliament has taken a major step towards beginning a review of the federal electoral system. On October 18, 2004, it unanimously amended the Speech from the Throne to instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs “to recommend a process that engages citizens and parliamentarians in an examination of our electoral system with a review of all options.”² We can thus expect serious discussion in the House of Commons on the report tabled there in March 2004 by the Law Commission of Canada,³ which set out in detail a new electoral model for Canada, with elements of a proportional representation (PR) system.

In any such discussion, the very existence of a minority government will be seized upon by opponents of reform to remind us that PR electoral systems seldom result in majority governments. This paper starts from the premise that we have reached a point in this country when the burden of proof lies with those who claim that producing single-party majorities in Parliament is the *sine qua non* of a good electoral system. The fact is that most stable democratic countries use a form of PR and systematic evidence⁴ shows that such elections are no less likely to produce good government. Worry among Canadians that instability will result when no one party has a majority of seats stems from our experience of minority situations under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. Though most minority Canadian governments in memory, e.g. under Pearson and Trudeau, were in fact quite effective, they were comparatively short-lived. But minority governments under PR need not give rise to the same concerns. Unlike the situation under FPTP, provoking an election under PR is not likely to bring majority government: so nothing is to be gained by hastily causing an election.

It is true that PR puts governing parties to harder tests. Getting a legislative agenda through takes more effort and time. Without an automatic majority, they have to spend time between, and not just during, elections justifying what they are doing. Since they have to work harder, in narrow efficiency terms – output per unit of work – governments

under PR are less efficient than governments under FPTP. But the democratic quality of the output is another matter. Overall, had the 2004 federal election been held under PR, it would have produced a minority or coalition government supported by parties representing more than half the voters, one no less efficient, accountable and transparent, and certainly more stable than the government produced under the current system.

The Law Commission proposal and the June election

So much for efficiency. What about democracy? The new Parliament, as noted, has before it a detailed proposal from the Law Commission of Canada for a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system to elect its 308 members. This is a compensatory two-ballot form of PR first developed in Germany and adapted for use in New Zealand (in 1996) and for the new Scottish Parliament and Welsh National Assembly (in 1999). In the system

proposed for Canada, each province constitutes an electoral region, except Ontario and Quebec; Ontario is subdivided into four regions and Quebec, into two. Voters in each region would cast two ballots,⁵ one for a candidate in a single-member constituency (just under 2/3 of seats⁶), the other for a “flexible”⁷ party list (just over 1/3 of seats), with candidates permitted to run both in a constituency and on the list.

Table 1 displays the number of seats won by each party in the 2004 election, as well as what they would have won, in both list and constituency seats, under the Law Commission model. Note that, as in all such simulations, we can only assume that the voters would have voted the same way, an assumption we know to be inaccurate.⁸ We can see that application of the

model results in outcomes quite faithful to voting intentions, i.e. full proportionality. This is in contrast to the actual outcome, in which the disparity between votes and seats won, though smaller than in previous elections due to the closeness of the vote, was still significant. For more on this topic, readers may wish to see the article by Lawrence LeDuc on page 37 in this issue.

Only the Conservatives (who won 30% of the votes and 32% of the seats in June 2004) would

Results of 2004 Election

	Seats won	National popular vote
Liberals	135	36.7%
Conservatives	99	29.6%
Bloc Québécois	54	12.4%
New Democrats	19	15.7%
Greens	0	4.3%
Independent	1	–

win roughly the same share of seats under the Law Commission model (31%). The Liberals’ advantage is reduced to 2% (37% of the vote netting 39% of seats, compared to the 44% of seats they actually won). The Bloc Québécois, which won 12% of the votes, would receive the same percentage of seats (compared to the 17.5% it actually won). The N.D.P., with 16% of the votes, would win 15% of the seats (compared to the 6.2% it actually won). Finally, rather than being shut out, the Green Party would win 3% of the seats with 4% of the votes.

Even more important is the effect on regional representation. Under the Law Commission model, in the combined Atlantic provinces, the Liberals would give up two seats to each of the Conservatives and N.D.P., the former breaking into the Liberal monopoly in P.E.I. and the latter gaining a foothold in Newfoundland and Labrador. In Quebec, the Conservatives and N.D.P., instead of being shut out, would win six and three seats respectively. In Ontario, the Liberals would lose 25 seats, including 7 to the Conservatives, 12 to the N.D.P. and (up to) 4 to the Greens.⁹ In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the Conservatives would cede 6 of their



More information on the mixed-member proportional electoral system used in New Zealand can be found on the Elections New Zealand Web site at www.elections.org.nz/esyst/govt_elect.html.

20 seats, 4 to the Liberals and 2 to the N.D.P. (thus giving the N.D.P. representation in Saskatchewan, where it was shut out despite receiving 23% of the vote). In Alberta, the Conservatives would cede 7 of their 26 seats, 4 to the Liberals, 2 to

an additional 4 seats and the Greens with 2.

The representation of women under the Law Commission model

How would women candidates have fared if the 2004 election had been fought under the Law Commission's proposed version of MMP? It is, of

course, impossible to know exactly who would have been on the party lists and, had the flexible list system

proposed by the Commission been used, the extent to which voters would have taken advantage of it to move women candidates into or out of winning top-of-the-list positions. However, given the significant public attention paid to the proportion of women candidates in the recent election,¹⁰ the parties would have been under considerable pressure to place women candidates in high list positions.

If the parties alternated men and women on their lists (as is done in Scandinavia, for example), half the 106 list MPs under the Law Commission model would be women. Maintaining the same proportion of women in the

The new Parliament has before it a detailed proposal from the Law Commission of Canada for a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system.

the N.D.P. and 1 to the Greens. In British Columbia, the main beneficiaries would be the N.D.P. with

Table 1
Simulation of the 2004 Election Results Using the Law Commission of Canada Formula

MEMBERS ELECTED, BY PARTY

Province/Territory	Liberal		Conservative		Bloc Québécois		N.D.P.		Green		Totals		
	Constituency	List	Constituency	List	Constituency	List	Constituency	List	Constituency	List	Constituency	List	Both
Newfoundland and Labrador	3	1	1	1	–	–	0	1	0	0	4	3	7
Prince Edward Island	1	2	0	1	–	–	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Nova Scotia	4	1	2	1	–	–	1	2	0	0	7	4	11
New Brunswick	4	1	1	2	–	–	1	1	0	0	6	4	10
Quebec	14	12	0	6	36	2	0	3	0	2	50	25	75
Ontario	50	0	16	17	–	–	4	15	0	4	70	36	106
Manitoba	2	3	4	2	–	–	3	0	0	0	9	5	14
Saskatchewan	1	2	8	0	–	–	0	3	0	0	9	5	14
Alberta	1	5	18	1	–	–	0	2	0	1	19	9	28
British Columbia	5	4	15	0	–	–	3	6	0	2	24*	12	36
Yukon	1	0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Northwest Territories	1	0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Nunavut	1	0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTALS	88	31	65	31	36	2	12	33	0	9	202	106	308*
	119		96		38		45		9				
Actual 2004 results	135		99		54		19		0				308*

Under the Law Commission formula,
the Liberals win 39% of seats with 37% of vote
the Conservatives win 31% of seats with 30% of vote
the N.D.P. wins 15% of seats with 16% of vote
the Bloc Québécois wins 12% of seats with 12% of vote
the Greens win 3% of seats with 4% of vote

*includes one elected independent



Over 1.24 million electors, about 60% more than in the 2000 election, voted at the advance polls in 2004.

district seats as in the election itself (21%), application of the Law Commission model would have resulted in 95 women elected in total: 53 (of 106) list MPs, plus 42 (of 202) constituency MPs. A perhaps more realistic simulation might be to apply the New Zealand ratios. In their version of MMP, with 43% of MPs coming from lists, women won an average of 38% of list seats in the three elections held under this system (compared to 22% of district seats).¹¹ Applying the 38% ratio to the list seats for Canada under the Law Commission model, we would have elected 82 women MPs (40 list and 42 district), still a distinct improvement over the 65 actually elected.

The thorny question of turnout

According to Elections Canada, 60.9% of registered voters turned out on June 28, the lowest turnout ever, down from 64.1% in 2000.¹² Yet 2000 was an election in which the outcome was widely anticipated in advance, while 2004 was expected to be a

cliff-hanger right to the end. Part of the explanation lies in the election date, June 28, when many Canadians were getting into a vacation mood. But there is clearly something deeper at work: this was the fourth consecutive election in which turnout declined. We know that a key factor in the declines of 1993, 1997 and 2000 was abstention among young people.¹³ Initial reports¹⁴ suggest that this was also the case in 2004.

A highly useful guide to what is happening is found in a recently published analysis of turnout in 22 democracies that have held elections continuously since World War II.¹⁵ Mark Franklin shows that the most important factor explaining turnout is the “character of elections,” consisting of the electoral system, the fractionalization of the party system, the time elapsed since the previous election, and the closeness of the outcome. Changes in the character of elections, he finds, largely account for the average 7% turnout drop in the past 30 years among the 22 countries.

What makes Franklin’s analysis original is that he places at its core the fact that age groups (cohorts) are differently affected by the character of elections. Voting, we know, is largely habitual; hence, the crucial group is the young, who have not yet developed habits of voting or not voting. These habits, he shows, are developed especially as a response to the character of the first (and second and third) elections for which one is eligible. But the effect is a long-term one, since with each new cohort arriving at an election, another is leaving. Turnout is affected as cohorts newly eligible to vote become set in their non-voting ways, replacing other cohorts that were more likely to vote.

The force of Franklin’s argument emerges in the connection shown between declining turnout and the time when countries, typically in the 1960s and 1970s, reduced the voting age. The effect was that a certain number of individuals failed to vote when first able, because they were at an age when they lacked the social networks conducive to voting and became socialized into non-voting behaviour. Part of the recent turnout



The Law Commission of Canada tabled its report on a new electoral model in the House of Commons in March 2004.

decline is thus traced to the replacement by these cohorts of earlier cohorts whose first electoral experiences were more conducive to developing habits of voting. Note that such replacement is slow: it is only years after the fact that the statistical effect becomes clearly visible.

This highly sophisticated analysis could explain why turnout continued to decline in 2004, even if there was a higher turnout by first-time voters

Were the next election and the one after it to be competitive, the effect would be compounded and begin to make itself felt on turnout.

than in 2000 in response both to the more competitive character of the 2004 election and extra efforts to get young people to the ballot box. But such an effect would be small and slow to appear, and could not by itself have offset the replacement of cohorts more inclined to vote by those arriving on the political scene in the non-competitive 1990s.

Were the next election and the one after it to be competitive, the effect would be compounded and begin to make itself felt on turnout. But this is unlikely under FPTP. For almost 100 years, Canada has alternated between periods of single-party (Liberal) domination and two-party competition. Moreover, regional voting patterns have – even in competitive epochs – led to a large number of uncompetitive districts.

There is effectively only one way to ensure that new voters confront more competitive elections, and that is to

change the electoral system. Adopting a system like the one recommended by the Law Commission would make virtually every vote count toward electing MPs and affecting the position of the parties. As such, at the very least, it would facilitate efforts in and out of civics classes¹⁶ to bring the young to the ballot box. Of course, any results would be slow to appear. Moreover, they would be limited, for there appear to be wider cultural forces, entirely unrelated to the character of elec-

tions, driving down turnout. However competitive, mainstream electoral politics is increasingly facing a different form of competition for the attention of younger generations,

one from the world of electronic celebrities, which can be entered at the push of a button on a TV remote controller, computer mouse or Playstation joystick.

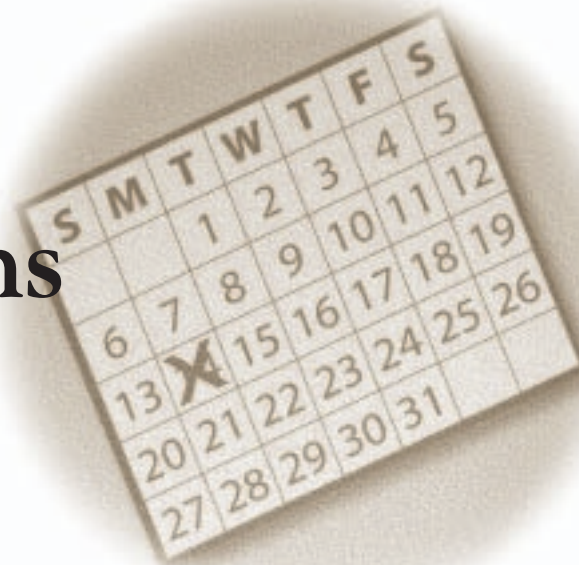
While we thus cannot hope to return to the turnout levels of the 1970s, our hands are not tied. A proportional electoral system, by establishing a context in which the composition of our representative institutions better reflects the views of electors, could make it easier to develop effective forms of civics education to address potential political dropouts, bringing the positions (and spokespersons) of the different parties into the classroom. At the very least, such combined efforts should stem turnout decline.

As demonstrated here, adopting an MMP system as proposed by the Law Commission of Canada would have produced election results that are arguably fairer in a number of ways: representation of parties, regions and

women. For these reasons, we can only hope that the current minority government situation proves to be an opportunity to consider electoral reform, and not a stick with which to beat it. ✕

NOTES

1. Information on electoral reform in the five provinces (identified by the relevant body) is available at British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform: www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public, Prince Edward Island's Electoral Reform Commission: www.gov.pe.ca/electoralreform/index.php3, New Brunswick's Commission on Legislative Democracy: www.gnb.ca/0100/index-e.asp, Quebec's Secrétariat à la réforme des institutions démocratiques: www.institutions-democratiques.gouv.qc.ca/reforme_institutions/coup_oeil_en.htm, Ontario's Democratic Renewal Secretariat: www.democraticrenewal.gov.on.ca/english/. Information about Yukon's electoral reform agenda is available at www.gov.yk.ca/news/2004/04-007.html.
2. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons of Canada (Hansard)*, 38th Parliament, 1st Session, Number 012, October 20, 2004, www.parl.gc.ca/38/1/parlbus/chambus/house/debates/012_2004-10-20/han012-E.htm.
3. Law Commission of Canada, *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform For Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Public Works and Government Services, 2004) at www.lcc.gc.ca/en/themes/gr/er/er_main.asp.
4. See, for example, Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
5. The calculations used to distribute seats are set out in Law Commission of Canada, *Voting Counts*, pp. 97–99.
6. The odd fraction results because the formula used is 60:40 for the Atlantic provinces, rather than 67:33, given the small population of these provinces.
7. The Law Commission proposes using the Swedish system, in which a locally popular candidate low on the party's regional list is moved to the top if he or she receives the "personal vote" of more than 8% of the party's supporters.
8. This is because far fewer voters than under FPTP are in a situation in which acting on their first preferences amounts to wasting their votes.
9. The simulation does not divide Ontario into the proposed regions, something beyond my capacity to do, which would probably reduce to three the number of seats for the Greens.
10. "A non-partisan network of influential women" publicly took the parties to task – most notably the Conservatives with only 11% women candidates – for failing to place more women in winnable ridings. (Cheryl Cornacchia, "Fewer women likely in next Parliament," *The Gazette* [Montréal], June 27, 2004, p. D3.)
11. Based on data from *The New Zealand Electoral Compendium*, 3rd ed. (Wellington: Electoral Commission, 2002), pp. 176–177.
12. Note: the 64.1% figure for 2000 is a correction announced by Elections Canada in March 2003 of the 61.2% official turnout figure tabled in the House of Commons.
13. While in most generations, people vote more as they get older, this does not explain the phenomenon. See Elisabeth Gidengil, André Blais, Neil Nevitte and Richard Nadeau, "Turned Off or Tuned Out?: Youth Participation in Canada," *Electoral Insight* Vol. 5, No. 2 (July 2003), pp. 9–14, at www.elections.ca/eca/eim/insight0703_e.pdf.
14. "When asked during the campaign's final 10 days how likely they were to vote in the upcoming election, respondents in their 20s were much less likely to commit to voting." Elisabeth Gidengil, Neil Nevitte, André Blais, Patrick Fournier and Joanna Everitt, "Why Johnny Won't Vote," *The Globe and Mail*, August 4, 2004, p. A15.
15. Mark N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
16. Fixed – and thus known in advance – election dates would help as well.



Fixed-Date Elections *Improvement or New Problems?*

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The importance of timing

In parliamentary systems such as we have in Canada, governments can time election calls to coincide with economic upturns, the completion of capital projects, favourable public opinion polls or the inexperience of new opposition leaders, or with almost any circumstance they wish. While it is difficult to find hard evidence to prove that clever timing really does improve one's chances of winning an election,¹ there is at least anecdotal evidence that governments think it does. To cite just one source, former New Democratic Party (N.D.P.) MP Lorne Nystrom, speaking in the House of Commons in February 2004, claimed that "[t]here is not a party in this country ... that has not manipulated the election date in order to suit their own political interests."² Indeed, critics of the Liberal Party of Canada maintained that the last two federal election calls were deliberately timed to coincide with the best possible moment for the governing party; were the elections to be held at later dates, the critics said, the outcomes would surely be quite different.³ It is easy, then, to believe that the ability to call an election at a date of the government's choosing constitutes a significant advantage for the party in power.

If so, governments may be winning elections they otherwise would not, thereby undermining the ability of our political system to renew itself. Furthermore, manipulation of election dates likely contributes to increased voter apathy, as well as to the erosion of the political system's relevance and legitimacy in the minds of citizens.⁴ The obvious

solution is to have fixed election dates. If elections were always held on the same date at specific intervals, then the public (not to mention opposition parties) would know well in advance when they would go to the polls, and governments would be forced to accept the public's decision regardless of whether the immediate circumstances favoured them.

This seems to be the view held by a growing number of Canadians. In 2000, the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) found that 54% of respondents supported fixed election dates.⁵ Four years later, that number has increased substantially. Just a week before Prime Minister Paul Martin called the 2004 Canadian general election, the Environics Research Group found that 81% of Canadians preferred that elections be held at specific and fixed times, instead of "whenever the party in power wants to call it."⁶

It is not just the public that likes the idea of fixed election dates: political parties across the country are embracing it as well. Support for such a reform covers the depth and breadth of the political spectrum, from left to right, government to opposition. Both the Conservative Party of Canada (Conservatives) and the N.D.P. consider setting fixed election dates a policy priority, while this past summer Ontario's Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty introduced legislation to set election dates in that province. British Columbia, also under a Liberal government, already has such legislation, while New Brunswick's Progressive Conservative government has struck a Commission on Legislative Democracy to consider setting fixed election

Durations Between Federal General Elections Since World War II

Election date	Majority/minority result	Prime Minister	Duration between elections*
June 27, 1949	Majority	Louis St-Laurent	4 years, 1 month
August 10, 1953	Majority	Louis St-Laurent	3 years, 10 months
June 10, 1957	Minority	John Diefenbaker	10 months
March 31, 1958	Majority	John Diefenbaker	4 years, 3 months
June 18, 1962	Minority	John Diefenbaker	10 months
April 8, 1963	Minority	Lester Pearson	2 years, 7 months
November 8, 1965	Minority	Lester Pearson/Pierre Trudeau	2 years, 8 months
June 25, 1968	Majority	Pierre Trudeau	4 years, 4 months
October 30, 1972	Minority	Pierre Trudeau	1 year, 8 months
July 8, 1974	Majority	Pierre Trudeau	4 years, 10 months
May 22, 1979	Minority	Joe Clark	9 months
February 18, 1980	Majority	Pierre Trudeau/John Turner	4 years, 7 months
September 4, 1984	Majority	Brian Mulroney	4 years, 3 months
November 21, 1988	Majority	Brian Mulroney/Kim Campbell	4 years, 11 months
October 25, 1993	Majority	Jean Chrétien	3 years, 7 months
June 2, 1997	Majority	Jean Chrétien	3 years, 6 months
November 27, 2000	Majority	Jean Chrétien/Paul Martin	3 years, 7 months
June 28, 2004	Minority	Paul Martin	

*Durations are rounded slightly to the nearest full month.

dates, among other possible reforms.⁷ Several provincial opposition parties, including New Brunswick's Liberal Party, the Saskatchewan Party and the

Fixing election dates under Canada's system of parliamentary government is no easy matter.

Alberta Liberal Party have come out in favour of fixing election dates. Alberta Liberal leader Kevin Taft voices a common sentiment: "It's time to stop playing politics with election dates. Elections should be held at fixed dates that suit the democratic wishes of Albertans."⁸

However, despite the apparent widespread support for the idea, fixing election dates under Canada's system

of parliamentary government is no easy matter. Indeed, to truly fix the dates so there can be no possibility of government manipulation is impossible, at least not without a radical and probably unachievable reform of our parliamentary system. As well, while fixing the election

dates might solve some problems, it could create others even worse. For that matter, there is some confusion about why the present system needs reform. Some people who call for fixed-date elections seem to be really arguing for a limit on the time that can pass between elections. However, such limits already exist. This, then, raises the question: What is the problem for which fixed-date elections are the solution?

Fixed dates, terms and responsible government

Fixed-date elections are held at specific and regularly scheduled dates. When election dates are fixed, so too is the length of tenure (the term) of governments and assemblies. The best-known example, for Canadians at any rate, is the American Congressional system, under which elections for the president, vice-president and Congress are held on specific dates at fixed intervals. An essential feature of their constitutional principle of the separation and balance of powers, fixing the election dates prevents one branch from being able to force elections and so undermine the authority of the other.

Canada's parliamentary system is based not on a separation and balance of powers, but on "responsible



In the United States, elections for Congress, the president and the vice-president are held on specific dates at fixed intervals.

government.”⁹ In our system, the executive and legislative branches of government are fused. In practical terms, this means that the prime minister and cabinet must be consistently supported by a majority in the House of Commons. Even so-called minority governments must find majority support, which means they must win the support of MPs from outside their party. If the government cannot achieve majority support, or if the House of Commons should pass a vote of non-confidence in the government, measures must be taken to restore majority support. This almost always results in the dissolution of Parliament, the calling of an election and formation of a new legislature. With modern party discipline, governments in Canada rarely lose the support of the majority. But it is a mistake to assume that such things cannot happen. As well, while Canadian elections usually provide one party with a majority of seats in the House of Commons, the most recent results show that this is not always the case.

This is the problem facing those who would like to fix election dates:

Attempts to fix election dates cannot restrict the right and ability of the prime minister to request a dissolution, or of the Governor General to grant it. To do so would undermine the principle of responsible government. If nothing else, it is unlikely that Canadian courts would regard such measures favourably, as the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling in *Ontario Public Service Employees’ Union v. Ontario (Attorney General)* suggests. Although this case dealt with the right of a provincial government to restrict civil servants from participating in federal politics, the Court made it clear that provinces lacked the authority to “bring about a profound constitutional upheaval by the introduction of political institutions foreign to and incompatible with the Canadian system.” Furthermore,

“it is uncertain, to say the least, that a province could touch upon the power of the Lieutenant-Governor to dissolve the legislature, or his power to appoint and dismiss ministers, without unconstitutionally touching his office itself.”¹⁰

It is likely courts would take a similar view if the federal government imposed fixed-date elections in such a way as to undermine or restrict the power of the Governor General to dissolve Parliament, or to accept such a request from a prime minister.

Does fixing election dates really challenge the principle of responsible government? I believe it does. Consider first the problem of non-confidence votes. Under our present system, a prime minister defeated by a vote of non-confidence either resigns or requests that the Governor General dissolve Parliament and an election be called. If fixing election dates meant that the latter option was unavailable, then the Governor General would have to appoint someone else to form a government to serve until the next date fixed for an election. Perhaps, under such circumstances, parties would be forced to compromise and co-operate. But perhaps, instead,



Governor General Adrienne Clarkson is greeted by the Prime Minister as she prepares to read the Speech from the Throne in Canada’s House of Commons on Oct. 5, 2004.

government would simply come to a standstill, with no party capable of forming a majority. Legislation would not be passed, and governments would administer rather than govern. Responsible government would be lost.

Under our system, flexible-date elections are the means by which parliamentary deadlocks and stalemates are resolved and majority support restored. If election dates were fixed, such a resolution would not be possible. This is why parliamentary assemblies that have set election dates nevertheless provide some fail-safe measure to avoid such a deadlock. Election dates are fixed in the Australian state of Victoria, but mid-term elections can still be called if the government should lose a confidence vote, if the premier should request a dissolution, or if no party should find majority support.¹¹ Similar provisions exist in British Columbia¹² and in Ontario's proposed legislation. But this raises the question whether the election date is really fixed at all. These are, after all, precisely the circumstances under which elections are called now.

But, it will be argued, non-confidence votes are a rarity; the real problem is prime ministers calling elections on a whim. So, perhaps one solution would be to ensure that dissolutions would only be accepted if the government suffered a defeat by an explicit vote of non-confidence. Or, similarly, Parliament could adopt Tom Kent's ingenious suggestion: that legislation be passed fixing dissolution dates; at any other time, dissolutions (and so election calls) would require "the votes of separate majorities of at least two of the parties in the House."¹³

Either of these proposals would indeed make calling elections at opportune

times less likely or at least more difficult, but neither solves the essential problems facing those wishing to fix election dates under our parliamentary system. First, they both touch upon the power of the Governor General to dissolve Parliament. It is true that the Governor General does not have to accept the request of a prime minister for dissolution.¹⁴ However, this is not the same thing as saying that Parliament has the constitutional power to pass legislation restricting the Governor General's power to accept that request. Nor, for that matter, does Parliament have the power to restrict a prime minister from making that request.

Yet even if there were a way around the constitutional problem, a serious practical problem would remain. Surely, a government denied its wish for dissolution, regardless of the procedure, would simply resign. Then the Governor General would have to dissolve Parliament or try to appoint another government. If the first, then the attempt to prevent prime ministers from forcing elections at a time of their own choosing clearly does not work. If the second, then the new government would be unlikely to secure majority support, especially if the old government had been in a majority situation. The stalemate described above would occur.

Finally, fixing the election dates under our system won't work because there are no sanctions that can be imposed on a premier or prime minister who ignores the new rules and requests a dissolution regardless. Consider the difference between preventing a prime minister from delaying an election too long and stopping a prime minister from calling an election too early. The

first is relatively easy: limit the maximum term a government can stay in office, which, of course, the Canadian Constitution already does. If a government should try to go beyond its five-year mandate, except in times of emergency, the Governor General has the power to dissolve Parliament. This is one of the emergency reserve powers still held by the formal executive.¹⁵ But how do you prevent a prime minister from requesting an early dissolution? What recourse is there if the prime minister should do so, despite any imposed restrictions? How, in other words, do you force a government to stay in office?

How to fix election dates

I have been arguing that any attempt to fix election dates under our parliamentary system must not undermine the fundamental principles of the Canadian Constitution nor create an unworkable system of government. But surely the advantages of having a fixed-date system, such as greater certainty for all parties and their candidates, the economic efficiency of administering predictable elections, and the improved ability of government

At best, election calls can become more predictable, orderly and regularized.

departments to plan, should force us to at least consider the idea. Besides, if nothing is done, the public will continue to believe that the timing of elections is manipulated to benefit the government in power. So perhaps the solution need not be as involved and as constitutionally entrenched as has been described. Maybe simply imposing a little more



Elections Canada reminds Canadians about the date for voting with a card during the election. As well, personalized voter information cards sent about a week earlier show the dates, hours and locations for voting in advance or on election day.

order on the procedure would prove satisfactory.

For example, governments could try to establish a tradition of calling elections at exact periods on the anniversary date, as was attempted by former Premier of Saskatchewan Tommy Douglas in the 1940s and '50s. Or they could use ordinary legislation, such as Ontario's Bill 86 (*Election Statute Law Amendment Act*, 2004) or B.C.'s fixed-date election legislation, which the province has incorporated into the *Constitution Act of British Columbia*.¹⁶ The Saskatchewan precedent, unfortunately, did not last past Douglas's tenure as premier. While the B.C. and Ontario legislation shows more promise, only time will tell whether it works. Yet if it does, it won't be because their legislation is able to force future governments to comply with its measures: future governments can always repeal the acts. But repealing a fixed-date election law should raise questions those governments might not wish to answer, and that

just might be sufficient incentive to maintain an orderly election schedule.

Still, calling such order a fixed-date election system is an exaggeration. Governments will have the means to ignore the set dates, and the entire system could easily be undermined if governments were determined to do so. More important, even if these measures worked, it is not clear that any of them, by themselves, truly address the fundamental issue underlying the call for fixed-date elections – that is, the concern that elections are often not fair contests.

Conclusion

What, precisely, is the problem for which fixed-date elections are the solution? Clearly, the public is frustrated with what it perceives to be overt and unfair manipulation of election dates by the party in power. But if measures to fix election dates were implemented, we could well end up with an even more dysfunctional system of legislative government than

we have now. As well, attempts to create a fixed-date system may force the government to engage in costly and ultimately futile constitutional battles. Finally, the public could decide that fixed-date election measures were hollow and impotent, and become even more cynical about the electoral process.

Under our parliamentary system, election dates cannot be fixed, not in any meaningful sense. The constitutional and practical problems would overwhelm any attempts to do so. At best, election calls can become more predictable, orderly and regularized. Still, certain measures could be put into place to rebuild the public's confidence in the integrity of the electoral and legislative processes. I believe what the public really objects to is not the fact that election calls are unpredictable, but that the party in power holds an unfair advantage and some elections are not fair contests. Therefore, measures that improve the competitive nature of elections would go a long way towards alleviating public dissatisfaction.

There are many ways to do this, though a full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. Some form of proportional representation, for example, would help. So would allowing more free votes in Parliament. More free votes might convince citizens their MPs matter, and so they might think elections matter more too. There are many other problems with our parliamentary system that need to be addressed as well, as people like Donald Savoie have so well identified.¹⁷ But the convolutions necessary to fix election dates strike me as requiring far too much effort for far too little improvement, and may very well make things much worse. ✖

NOTES

1. Alastair Smith, "Endogenous Election Timing in Majoritarian Parliamentary Systems," *Economics and Politics* Vol. 8, No. 2 (July 1996), pp. 85–110, and "Election Timing in Majoritarian Parliaments," *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 33, Part 3 (July 2003), pp. 397–418; Jac C. Heckelman, "Electoral Uncertainty and the Macroeconomy: The Evidence from Canada," *Public Choice* Vol. 113, No. 1–2 (Oct. 2002), pp. 179–189; Steven D. Roper and Christopher Andrews, "Timing an Election: The Impact on the Party in Government," *The American Review of Politics* Vol. 23 (Winter 2002), pp. 305–318; Kaare Strøm and Stephen M. Swindle, "Strategic Parliamentary Dissolution," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 96, No. 3 (Sept. 2002), pp. 575–591.
2. Lorne Nystrom was speaking to his own motion, a Private Member's Bill to fix election dates. (*Hansard*, Canadian House of Commons, Feb. 17, 2004). See also Lorne Nystrom, "Spinning election rumours [Why don't we have fixed election dates?]," *The National Post*, Oct. 12, 2000, p. A19.
3. For the 2000 election, see John Geddes and Julian Beltrame, "A sense of timing: Liberals have to trust Chrétien that voters will not lash out against a fall election," *Maclean's* Vol. 113, Issue 41 (Oct. 9, 2000), pp. 18–19. For 2004, see "Martin's mandate; Canada's election," *The Economist* Vol. 371, Issue 8377 (May 29, 2004), p. 12, and "Martin's new age of minority; Canada's election," *The Economist* Vol. 372, Issue 8382 (July 3, 2004), p. 29.
4. Paul Howe, "The Sources of Campaign Intemperance," *Policy Options* Vol. 22, No. 1 (January-February 2001), pp. 21–24.
5. Research conducted from February 16 to April 2, 2000. Paul Howe and David Northrup, "Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Canadians," *Policy Matters* Vol. 1, No. 5 (July 2000).
6. The survey, commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, was conducted between May 12–18, 2004; the election was called on May 23. The actual question was: "Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?" followed by six questions concerning electoral procedures in Canada. The sixth was: "Federal elections should be held on a fixed date every four years instead of whenever the party in power wants to call it." CBC poll 2004.
7. See www.gnb.ca/0100/index-e.asp.
8. "Alberta Liberals would hold fixed elections every four years, says Taft," Canadian Press, June 18, 2004.
9. See Peter Aucoin, Jennifer Smith and Geoff Dinsdale, *Responsible Government: Clarifying Essentials, Dispelling Myths and Exploring Change* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 2004).
10. *Ontario Public Service Employees' Union v. Ontario (Attorney General)* [1987] 2 S.C.R. 2.
11. Australian State of Victoria *Constitution (Parliamentary Reform) Act 2003* [Act No. 2/2003]. See in particular, Part 1, s. 1(a) and Part 2, s. 3. Under this Act, the assembly automatically expires (is dissolved) every four years in November. If the assembly should be dissolved earlier, then "the subsequent Assembly shall expire on the Tuesday which is 25 days before the last Saturday in November which is nearest to the last anniversary of the election day on which it was elected that occurs not more than 4 years after it was elected." (s. 38(2)).
12. The next provincial general election will be held on Tuesday, May 17, 2005. Each provincial general election thereafter will be held on the 2nd Tuesday in May in the fourth year following the most recently held provincial general election (*Constitution Act*, s. 23).
13. Tom Kent, "He must pluck his power ...," *The Globe and Mail*, January 29, 2004, p. A19.
14. But, save for the famous 1926 King-Byng affair, the Governor General always has. On the King-Byng affair, see Roger Graham, ed., *The King-Byng Affair, 1926: A Question of Responsible Government* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pub. Co., 1967).
15. R. MacGregor Dawson, *The Government of Canada*, 5th ed., Norman Ward rev. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 161 ff.
16. However, courts have ruled that this Act is, despite its title, still merely ordinary legislation. See Peter W. Hogg, *Constitutional Law of Canada* (Scarborough, Ontario: Carswell, 2003), p. 8, note 33 and the case cited therein.
17. Donald J. Savoie, *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).