



Commonly Used Terms

MP: Acronym for “Member of Parliament”. This term refers to the candidate in a riding who wins the majority of votes in an election and will have a seat in the House of Commons. He or she can represent a political party, or be independent.

Strategic Voting: Voting for a candidate in order to defeat another candidate, even if you don’t support his or her platform. Several local and national organizations have launched campaigns to encourage strategic voting, providing information on local ridings and candidates to support.

Platform: The promises made during an election on key issues.

Riding: The geographical area represented by each Member of Parliament, this is also known as a

Constituents: The residents of a riding.

Legislation: Proposed or adopted laws that are debated in the House of Commons and the Senate.

Policy: A detailed government or institutional plan regarding a specific issue.

Political Spectrum: A term often used to describe the ideological position of a party on a spectrum. Those on the left are often associated with socialism; those on the right are often associated with conservatism; those in the centre are often described as liberals. These are very loose designations.

First Past the Post: Canada’s electoral system is referred to as a “first past the post” system. The candidate with the most votes in a riding wins a seat in the House of Commons and represents that riding as its Member of Parliament (MP). The Governor General asks the Members of Parliament to form a government, which is normally the party whose candidates have won the most seats; that party’s leader generally becomes Prime Minister. In Canada, majority governments are regularly formed by parties with the support of under 40% of votes cast.

Proportional Representation: : Proportional representation is any voting system designed to produce a representative body (like a parliament, legislature, or council) where voters elect representatives in proportion to the votes cast.

Register to vote

Every Canadian citizen is entitled to vote. If you have just turned 18, or have moved in the last four years, you may not be registered to vote. Check the Elections Canada website. <http://www.elections.ca>

Is this your first time voting? Be sure to register before election day to avoid the wait. Here’s how:

- **OPTION 1:** Register online – most people can register online by providing the number from their driver’s licence or provincial or territorial ID card to confirm their identity. **Register online by Tuesday, October 13 at 6:00 p.m.** This option can also be used if you are not sure whether you have registered or not.
- **OPTION 2:** Register in person at your local Elections Canada office, between Monday, August 17 and Tuesday, October 13 at 6:00 p.m.
- **OPTION 3:** Register by mail – on Monday August 17 or later, call your local Elections Canada office to request a registration form. Mail back the form, with a copy of your proof of identity and address, so the office receives it by Tuesday, October 13 at 6:00 p.m.

There are certain pieces of identification you must provide when registering or voting. Visit Elections Canada’s website to see a list of ID options. Don’t forget to bring your voter information card on election day, as well! Remember – there are also ways to vote ahead of October 19 at advanced polling stations!

What else can I do?

Remember, participating in democracy is more than just voting once every four years! To be a contributing and informed citizen, participate whenever and wherever you can in your community! Join a parent’s council, take part in a fundraising drive, support a local cause, write a letter to your newspaper, or call your city councillor to discuss an issue.

You may also wish to consider joining a political party and/or working as a volunteer. This does not mean you have to agree with every position that your party takes but it will help each party to hear a diversity of voices on the issues.

Be an engaged citizen every day of the year!

Contact the NCCM for more information or to order civic engagement training & workshops & publications for your association or group:

www.nccm.ca

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