



9 Parties and Elections

Chapter Outline

- The Definition and Functions of Political Parties
- The Origins and Evolution of Canada's Party System
 - The Nature of Brokerage Politics
 - The Role of Minor Parties in the Brokerage System
 - The 1993 and 1997 Elections: The End of Brokerage Politics in Canada?
- A Divided Electorate: The 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections
 - The 2004 Election
 - The 2006 Election
 - The 2008 Election
- Realignments and the 2011 Election
- 2015 Election: A Change of Tone
 - Selecting Party Leaders in Canada
 - Three Models for Selecting Party Leaders
- The Electoral System and Its Consequences
 - Alternatives to FPTP
 - Proportional Representation
 - Ranked Ballot—Instant Run-Off with a Single Transferable Vote
 - Hybrid Electoral Systems

- Voting Behaviour
 - The West
 - Quebec
 - Class
 - Gender and Rural/Urban Split
- Party Finances and Special Interests
- Summary

Learning Objectives

After reading Chapter 9 in *Canadian Democracy*, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the seven functions performed by political parties.
- Explain the meaning of brokerage politics and provide examples from the histories of the Liberal and Conservative parties.
- Identify the effects of Canada's electoral system on both the party system and legislative representation.
- Discuss the sources of party revenues and argue whether greater restrictions on private donations to political parties would be good or bad.
- Describe the outcome of the 1993 federal election and argue whether or not this portends the end of brokerage politics in Canada.
- Discuss the outcomes of the 2011 and 2015 federal elections, identifying the factors that may account for those outcomes and the two elements of continuity that are evident in the results.
- Discuss Canadians' patterns of political participation in recent years.
- Compare and contrast the single-member, simple-plurality electoral system to that of proportional representation and other alternatives to First-Past-The-Post.

Key Concepts

Brokerage politics A strategic choice by a political party to avoid ideological appeals in favour of a flexible centrist style of politics (p. 322)

Caucus model of leadership selection Selection takes place behind closed door without open competition between rival candidates (p. 340)

Convention model of leadership selection Selection takes place at a party leadership convention after several months of campaigning by candidates (p. 340)

Election Expenses Act, 1974 Act passed to control party finance, which implemented spending limits for individual candidates and political parties during election campaigns, changes to the Broadcasting Act requiring radio and television stations available to the parties represented in the House of Commons both paid and free broadcast time during election campaigns, and a system of

reimbursement for part of their expenses for candidates who receive at least 15 per cent of the popular vote (pp. 354–355)

Hybrid electoral systems A combination of any one of the electoral systems to form a hybrid model, for e.g. The mixed-member proportional electoral system (MMP) (p. 346)

Minor parties Smaller parties that provide a much-needed source of policy innovation, goading the major parties into acting on the concerns of regions, classes, or significant social groups that they have traditionally ignored or underestimated (p. 329)

National Policy of 1878–9 A nation-building program that focused on implementation of a protective tariff designed to promote the growth of domestic manufacturing in Ontario and Quebec, the encouragement of western settlement to open up a market for the products of central Canadian industry and to protect this territory from American encroachment, and the creation of a transcontinental railroad to ship the manufactured goods of the centre to the newly opened western territories (p. 323)

One member–one vote model of leadership selection Selection takes place by votes cast by party members. Some votes may take place at a fixed convention, but most votes are cast electronically elsewhere (p. 341)

Open ballot Method of voting whereby voters simply declared their choice at the polls in the presence of a government official (p. 324)

Paid-access opportunities Fundraising events where, for a substantial admission price, donors can rub shoulders with party leaders and members of government (p. 355)

Patron–client relations Relationships where votes are exchanged for certain “favours” (p. 324)

Patronage The distribution of favours by a governing politician (e.g., political appointments or government contracts) in exchange for political support (p. 324)

Plurality system (or **first-past-the-post system**) Where the candidate who receives the most votes in a constituency election becomes the member of Parliament (or provincial legislature) for that constituency (p. 342)

Political party An organization that offers slates of candidates to voters at election time (p. 321)

Preferential Voting A ranked voting system where voters rank candidates in order of preference (p. 346)

Proportional representation A method of electing government representatives whereby a party’s percentage of the popular votes translates into a corresponding share of seats in the legislature (p. 345)

Realignment Occurs when an election or a series of elections produces a durable change in the parties’ bases of support (p. 334)

Single-member constituency A system of electing representatives to legislatures in which each constituency (riding) gets one representative in the House of Commons (or provincial legislature) (p. 342)

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Is the change of tone that resulted from the 2015 federal election likely to endure?
2. What are the main types of electoral systems? What provinces have looked at the possibility of changing their electoral system? What system appeals to you and why? Which do you find least appealing?
3. Is there a notable difference between the political parties at the federal level and those at the provincial level? If so, why might this be the case?
4. Why is voter turnout generally low during Canadian federal elections?
5. Which of the three models of leadership selection is the most appealing and why?

Additional Resources

CBC archives, video clips on parties and leaders

http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/parties_leaders/

CBC archives, video clips on elections

<http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/elections/>

Democracy Watch, www.dwatch.ca

Elections Canada

<http://www.elections.ca/home.aspx>

Vote Compass

<http://www.votecompass.com/>