

GLOSSARY

A

absolute monarchy — A form of government where a monarch (or dictator) retains full political power over a state and its people.

advance poll — Advance polls operate between the Tuesday and Saturday in the week prior to election day. Advance polls are open between the hours of 9:00 am and 8:00 pm on each polling day.

alderman — See *councillor*.

algorithm — A process or set of rules that tells a computer how to solve a problem or perform a task. Websites and social media platforms use special algorithms to identify what users like and personalize the content they see.

analyze — To examine methodically and in detail for the purpose of explanation and interpretation.

anarchy — A system defined by the absence of government or any enforced authority, giving each individual complete liberty.

apathy — A state of indifference, or a lack of feeling or emotion towards someone or something.

authoritarian — Authoritarian governments exercise forceful control over the population, with no particular concern for its preferences or for public opinion.

autocracy — A type of government where political power is concentrated in the hands of one individual who rules without restriction. An autocracy can be a dictatorship or an absolute monarchy.

B

ballot — A document used by voters to indicate their preference in an election, by-election, electoral event or referendum.

ballot box — A container for marked ballots.

bias — A preconceived opinion, a one-sided view or a prejudice against something or someone without evidence or adequate reasoning.

bill — See *legislation*.

by-election — An election that is conducted in one or more electoral divisions, between general election periods.

C

cabinet — The governing body made up of the ministers of government ministries. Cabinet ministers advise the premier. The ministers are appointed by the lieutenant governor on the recommendation of the premier and

are usually chosen from the group of elected members of the party that forms the government. Cabinet meets regularly to set the business it will propose to the legislature.

cabinet minister — A member of the cabinet or executive council. Cabinet ministers introduce and debate bills. They also administer specific government ministries and formulate government policy while advising the premier.

campaign period — In the case of a general election, the campaign period begins on February 1 in the year in which the election is held and ending two months after election day.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms — The Charter guarantees certain political rights to Canadian citizens and civil rights of everyone in Canada.

candidate — An individual who is running to be elected in an electoral division. In provincial elections, candidates can be independent or represent a recognized political party.

caucus — A group composed of elected representatives who belong to a given party.

centre (spectrum) — A political party or individual holding moderate views or middle-of-the-road opinions. An individual with these views can be referred to as a centrist.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) — A non-partisan Officer of the Legislative Assembly, responsible for the administration of the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act*.

coalition government — When two or more political parties join together to form a government, neither of which would be able to form a majority government on their own.

communism — A political ideology that promotes the establishment of an egalitarian and classless society based on common ownership and control of the means of production and property.

concurrency — When federal, provincial/territorial and/or local governments overlap in jurisdictional responsibilities.

consensus democracy — A form of democracy that uses a consensus decision-making model in the process of developing legislation. Consensus democracies aim to be more collaborative and inclusive by taking into account as broad a range of opinions as opposed to decisions made by majority rule.

consensus government — A form of government where political power is shared by a group of individuals without party affiliation and a more collaborative approach is used to develop legislation. Consensus government is practiced in Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

conservatism — A political ideology advocating for the preservation of society and opposing radical changes.

constituency — See *electoral division*.

constituency association — An organization endorsed by a registered party or an independent member of the legislative assembly to handle ongoing activities, including fundraising.

constituent — An individual who lives in an electoral division.

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constitution — A set of fundamental principles or established laws that define the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people living within it.

constitutional monarchy — A form of government where the authority of the monarch is limited by a constitution. There is a democratically elected government with a leader, while the monarch remains the head of state and performs ceremonial duties. Canada is a constitutional monarchy as the Queen is the official head of state and is represented by the governor general at the federal level and a lieutenant governor in each province.

councillor — An elected member of a municipal council. Also known as an alderman.

councils — Elected bodies for municipalities that exercise a range of powers on behalf of local residents and ratepayers.

the Crown — Represents the legal embodiment of executive, legislative and judicial governance in the monarchy. In Canada, the monarch's powers are exercised either by the monarch personally or by his or her representative in each jurisdiction (governor general, lieutenant governors).

D

declined ballot — A ballot returned to the deputy returning officer by an elector who declines to cast a vote.

democracy — A type of government where a majority of the people are included in political decision-making. Citizens elect political representatives to make decisions on their behalf and are also free to run for political office.

democratic rights — Democratic rights include the right of every Canadian citizen, 18 years of age or older, to vote in an election, to be a candidate in an election and the requirement that governments hold elections at least every five years and that elected representatives meet at least once per year.

deputy returning officer (DRO) — The election official who supervises a polling station. The deputy returning officer's tasks include administering declarations, issuing and instructing the electors how to mark their ballots, counting the ballots and certifying the results.

dictatorship — A type of government where one person or ruling group has power. Power is maintained through the use of a party or military, without the consent of the people. Citizens have limited rights and freedoms. There is usually a heavy military presence and no independent media.

disinformation — False information that is deliberately created and shared to cause harm. It has the goal of confusing people about what is true and influencing how they think and act.

E

editorial — A newspaper article written by or on behalf of a publisher, editor or editorial team that provides an opinion or analysis of a topical issue, event or situation.

election — The process by which our elected representatives and government are chosen. Elections are usually held at regular intervals.

election commissioner — A non-partisan Officer of the Legislative Assembly, responsible for fully investigating complaints, levying administrative penalties, issuing letters of reprimand, entering into compliance agreements and recommending prosecutions.

election day — See *polling day*.

election officer — Persons who perform a specific role in the conduct of an election. Some, like the returning officer, serve electors throughout the election period in an office established in the electoral division. Others serve electors at the advance polls and on polling day.

election period — The 28-day period following the issuance of the writs of election and ending on election day.

Elections Alberta — A non-partisan, independent office of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, which is responsible for the administration of provincial elections, by-elections and referenda.

elector — An individual who is eligible to vote. To be eligible to vote you must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age or older and ordinarily resident in Alberta. Also known as a voter.

electoral division (ED) — A geographical area represented by an elected official. Also known as a riding or constituency. There are 87 electoral divisions being contested in the 2019 provincial election, and a Member of the Legislative Assembly will be elected to represent each.

electoral system — The process by which votes are translated into seats in a parliament or legislature. In Alberta and across Canada, we use the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) or Single-Member Plurality system.

electorate — The whole body of electors.

enfranchise — The extension of the right to vote to a particular group of people.

enumeration — The process used to collect data from electors for the purpose of developing a list of electors.

executive branch — The branch of government that implements and enforces laws, rules and regulations with the support of the public service.

F

fact — Something known to exist or to have happened.

fact-based journalism — Focuses on the reporting of events, issues or developments with the goal of informing people. While it may include analysis or assessment, it is based on facts and not opinion.

fake news — A politicized and controversial term to refer to incorrect information.

facism — An authoritarian ideology, usually headed by highly nationalistic or militaristic one-party states.

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federal — One of the levels of government in Canada; pertaining to the whole country.

filter bubble — The result of internet users only encountering news and information that conform to what they already like and believe. Filter bubbles are caused in part by algorithms that personalize the information users see online.

First Nations — First Nations comprise Indigenous people considered by the federal government as non-status Indians and status Indians. First Nations are located on lands called reserves or in communities across the country.

First-Past-The-Post — The electoral system in which the candidate who receives more votes than any other single candidate wins.

fixed-date election — A requirement that elections are held on pre-determined dates on a specific schedule. Alberta established fixed-date elections beginning in 2012, with a requirement that provincial general elections be held in the three-month period between March 1 and May 31, during every fourth calendar year.

freedom — The power or right to act, speak or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.

G

general election — An election usually held at regular intervals or fixed dates in which candidates are elected in the electoral divisions of the nation or province/territory to represent citizens.

government — Refers to the people and institutions put in place to lead a country, nation, province or community. The role of government is to create and enforce laws, provide services and make decisions for the benefit of the people living within its borders.

governor general — The federal representative of the Queen and the ceremonial head of state. This person is appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the prime minister. The governor general opens, suspends and dissolves the Parliament, and gives or withholds royal assent to bills.

H

House of Commons — Part of the legislative branch of the federal government and housed in the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. Located in Ottawa, the House of Commons consists of 338 Members of Parliament who debate, amend and pass laws, rules and regulations for the entire country.

I

impartial — Unbiased; not favouring one side or opinion more than another.

incumbent — The existing holder of a political office. An electoral division without an incumbent candidate is known as an open seat.

independent — A candidate or elected representative who does not represent a political party.

Indigenous peoples — Comprises the First Nations, Inuit and Métis of Canada.

Indigenous government — The forms of government in some Indigenous communities or First Nations. Indigenous governments replace, overlap, or share certain responsibilities with the government of their province/territory or the federal government.

information officer (IO) — An individual appointed in a polling place to greet and assist electors, to help direct electors to the correct poll, and to help maintain peace and order in the polls.

information pollution — See *misinformation and disinformation*.

informed citizenship — Involves seeking out news and information from a variety of sources, comparing perspectives and keeping up with new developments.

issue — An important topic or problem for debate or discussion.

issue poll — Focus on assessing voters' attitudes on specific issues and proposed policies.

J

journalism — consists of the gathering, evaluating, creating, presenting of and/or commenting on news and information.

journalists — Individuals who hold government and other sources of power to account, help inform citizens about events and developments, foster debate about issues and give people a voice.

judicial branch — The branch of government responsible for overseeing and administering the law. The judicial branch interprets the law and punishes those who violate established laws, rules and regulations.

L

left (spectrum) — On the political spectrum, one who favours social services and government intervention in the economy, and policies that promote social equality, socialist or progressive views.

legislation — A proposed bill or law introduced to a parliament or legislature. It is enacted when passed by the parliament or legislative assembly and given royal assent.

legislative assembly — A legislative body composed of elected members at the provincial or territorial level. The role of the legislative assembly is to pass legislation, approve public finances and scrutinize government.

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legislative branch — The branch of government responsible for debating, amending and passing laws.

legislature — Formally, the Lieutenant Governor acting by and with the advice and consent of the legislative assembly. Also the term commonly used to refer to the parliament buildings or the building where the legislative assembly gathers.

liberalism — A political ideology that favours individual liberty but acknowledges the need for some form of government intervention in the economy.

libertarianism — A political ideology that advocates for minimal state intervention in the lives of citizens.

lieutenant governor — The representative of the Queen and the ceremonial head of state at the provincial level. This person is appointed by the governor general on the recommendation of the prime minister. The lieutenant governor opens, suspends and dissolves the legislative assembly, and gives or withholds royal assent to bills passed by the legislature.

list of electors — The document listing all electors, by polling subdivision, which is used by candidates for the purpose of campaigning and by election officers for administrative purposes on polling day. Information on the list of electors includes electors' full names, addresses and telephone numbers.

M

majority government — A government formed by the party or the coalition of parties holding more than half of the seats in the parliament or legislature.

mayor — The head of a municipal council in an urban municipality.

Member of Parliament (MP) — An individual elected by the people in a particular federal riding to represent them in the House of Commons. There are currently 338 MPs and each represents a different electoral division.

Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) — An individual elected by the people in a particular electoral division to represent them in the legislative assembly. There will be 87 MLAs elected in the 2019 provincial election.

minister — See *cabinet minister*.

ministry — The public service in Alberta is divided into ministries. Each ministry is responsible for a specific area of public policy, government function or service delivery.

minority government — A government that holds less than half of the seats in the parliament or legislature, but governs because it holds more seats than any other party. It must maintain the confidence of the parliament or legislature to continue governing.

misinformation — False information that the person sharing it believes it to be true. While misinformation can be damaging, its intent is not to cause harm.

mobile poll — A polling station established to serve electors in treatment centres, supportive living facilities, emergency shelters and community support centres.

monarchy — A form of government where a monarch (king or queen) or royal family holds the political power. Political power is inherited and usually lasts until death. A monarchy can be an absolute monarchy or a constitutional monarchy.

municipal — Referring to the most local level of government in Canada. Municipal or local governments exist as a result of provincial or territorial legislation.

N

neutral — An individual or opinion that is not aligned with or does not support any side on a given issue.

non-partisan — An individual or organization with no party affiliation or political bias.

O

official agent — An elector appointed by a candidate pursuant to the *Election Act* to assist the candidate during the campaign.

official opposition — The party that holds the second-largest number of seats in the parliament or legislature. It is accorded certain financial and procedural advantages over other parties in opposition.

oligarchy — A government system in which power rests with a small number of privileged people.

opinion — A personal view, attitude or judgement. Opinions are personal and highly subjective, and shaped by experiences, values, knowledge and perspectives.

opinion poll — A question or a series of questions designed to measure the public's views on a specific topic or series of topics.

opinion journalism — Provides a viewpoint about an event, issue or development. It can be meant to critique, praise, interpret or persuade. It may not be impartial or be balanced, and is usually impacted by preconceived notions or opinions.

opposition party — A political party that is neither the governing party nor part of a coalition of parties forming the government.

P

parliament — The term used for Canada's federal legislature.

parliamentary democracy — A type of representative democracy in which members are elected to a parliament or legislature. The political party with the greatest number of seats or elected representatives in the parliament or legislature forms government and

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determines the leader of the government. Canada is a parliamentary democracy.

partisan — Support of a political party, cause or person.

party leader — An individual chosen or elected to act as the head of a political party.

party member — An individual who belongs to a political party.

perspective — A viewpoint or an outlook, a way of looking at things.

plank — Individual topics or issues in a party's platform.

platform — A series of declared principles and policies on jurisdictional issues concerning government and the public. Parties share their platforms through announcements, advertising and events.

political ideology — A set of shared ideals or beliefs about how politics and government should function. Ideologies include liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism and fascism, among others.

political party — A group of people sharing a particular ideology and set of goals that puts forward candidates for election, whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change.

political spectrum — The political spectrum is a means of characterizing beliefs, values and priorities, and provides a conceptual framework in which to view and evaluate ideologies, political parties and public policies.

poll — A sampling or collection of opinions on a subject taken from either a selected or a random group of individuals for the purpose of analysis.

poll clerk — The election officer who assists the deputy returning officer at a polling station by maintaining the list of electors and other polling day documentation, among other responsibilities.

polling day — The day fixed for voting at an election, also known as election day.

polling place — A location (school, community league, etc.) where one or more polling stations are established for the purpose of voting at an election.

polling station — A station provided for electors in one polling subdivision to vote at an election. There may be several polling stations in one polling place.

polling subdivisions (PSD) — The units into which electoral divisions are divided for the purpose of effective election administration. There is a polling station established for each polling subdivision, at which a deputy returning officer and poll clerk manage the voting process. Several polling stations may exist in one polling place.

popular vote percentage — The percentage of all ballots cast for a particular party. A reflection of support across a jurisdiction.

preference poll — Report on which leader, party or candidate is favoured at the time by the general public. Also known as horse race polls.

premier — The leader of a provincial or territorial government. After a provincial election, the leader of the party with the greatest number of elected members usually becomes the premier.

prime minister — The leader of the federal government. After a federal election, the leader of the party with the greatest number of elected members usually becomes the prime minister.

provincial — Referring to one of the levels of government in Canada; pertaining to the province.

R

reeve — The head of a municipal council in a rural municipality.

rejected ballot — A ballot rejected by the deputy returning officer, during the unofficial count, if the voter's intention is unclear; or, a special ballot that is received after the close of the polls on polling day.

republic — A sovereign state, country or government without a monarch. The democratically elected government holds all political power, government leaders exercise power according to the rule of law, and there is often a constitution.

representative democracy — A system of government where representatives are selected through elections to make decisions on behalf of the public.

responsibility — A duty or obligation that binds you to respect, promote and maintain certain rights.

returning officer (RO) — The individual responsible for the enumeration and election in one of the province's electoral divisions. The responsibility includes recruitment, training and supervision of the front-line election officers who staff the polling stations.

reverse image search — A technique used to identify the source of a digital image which can reveal if a photo has been altered or used out of context.

riding — See *electoral division*.

right — A protected freedom that legally entitles you to take certain actions.

right (spectrum) — On the political spectrum, one who favours conservative views and traditions. Individuals on the right believe that government should not interfere with people and businesses, and that taxes should be as low as possible.

rural municipality — Include municipal districts or counties in rural areas of the province. It includes farmlands as well as unincorporated communities such as hamlets and rural residential subdivisions.

S

scrutineer — An elector who is authorized to represent a candidate at a polling station to observe the voting process and the counting of ballots.

seat count — The number of seats that each political party has in the parliament or legislature. The party or coalition of parties with the highest seat count traditionally forms the government.

secret ballot — Government elections use a secret ballot, which means no one except the elector knows the choice that was made.

self-government — An Aboriginal or Indigenous group with control over its own affairs. Comprehensive land claims agreements (modern treaties) between Canadian governments and First Nations often result in Indigenous peoples having greater autonomy in choosing their own method(s) of representation and decision-making.

Senate — Part of the legislative branch of the federal government in Canada. Located in Ottawa, the Senate consists of 105 appointed Senators.

Single-Member Plurality — An electoral system based on single-member districts, where the successful candidate is elected if they win the most votes in their electoral division. Also known as First-Past-The-Post.

slogan — A catchy phrase created and repeated in advertising and politics.

socialism — A political ideology that favours a system in which the means of production, distribution and exchange are owned by the community collectively, usually through the state.

special ballot — A means for qualified electors to cast a ballot, if they will not be able to vote during the advance polls or on polling day due to physical incapacity, absence from the electoral division, imprisonment, is an appointed election officer, being a resident of a remote area, or any other circumstance prescribed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

special mobile poll — A poll that can be established for post-secondary campuses, work camps, correctional institutions, facilities on indigenous reserves, Métis settlements, and in select public buildings per the Chief Electoral Officer. Special mobile polls take place during the advance polls.

speech from the throne — The speech delivered by the lieutenant governor for each new session of the legislature. This speech outlines the government's plans and initiatives for the session. Also known as the Throne Speech.

spoiled ballot — A ballot that has been kept out of the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn and exchanged for a new one.

Status Indian — First Nations individuals registered under the *Indian Act* who are entitled to various programs and services.

subsidiarity — The principle regarding the division of responsibilities among the different levels of government; where the government closest to the issue governs it.

T

tabulation — The counting of ballots following an election. Ballots are counted and recounted to ensure an accurate election result is recorded.

territorial — Referring to one of the levels of government in Canada; pertaining to the territory.

U

universal suffrage — The extension of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of restrictions against women, Indigenous peoples and ethnic and religious minorities.

urban municipality — Consist of areas where there is a concentration of people and buildings, including cities, towns, villages and summer villages.

V

valid ballot — A ballot that is properly marked for only one candidate.

values — An individual's principles or standards of behaviour and priorities in life.

voter — Refers to an elector who has voted.

voter turnout — The total number of people who voted expressed as a percentage of the total number of eligible voters or registered voters.

voting screen — A screen in a polling station behind which voters go to mark their ballot in private.

W

Where to Vote (WTV) card — The card that is sent to every registered elector and valid address in the province of Alberta detailing voting options and methods of voting.

worldview — How an individual sees the world and interprets events on a daily basis.

writ — A formal written order, issued by the Chief Electoral Officer directing the returning officers to conduct elections within their respective electoral divisions.