

A

acclamation — A candidate is elected by acclamation if they have no opponents. No vote is held.

advance voting — An opportunity to vote before election day. Also sometimes called advance polling. There are four days of advance voting. You can vote on the 10th, 9th, 8th, and 7th day before election day (October 9-12, 2015) from noon to 8:00pm.

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.

autocracy — See *dictatorship*.

B

backbencher — A member of parliament or legislative assembly who is not a party leader, cabinet minister or opposition critic.

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

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

bill — Proposed legislation or law introduced to the parliament or legislative assembly. It becomes an act when passed

by the parliament or legislative assembly and given royal assent.

by-election — An election held in a particular riding to fill a vacancy in the House of Commons or legislature at any time other than during a general election. Several by-elections may be held on the same day.

C

cabinet — This governing body is made up of the ministers of government departments. This body advises the prime minister. The ministers are appointed by the governor general on the recommendation of the prime minister and are usually chosen from elected members of the party that forms the government.

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

candidate — A person who seeks election to public office. A candidate running in a federal election or by-election is trying to become a Member of Parliament.

caucus — A group composed of Members of Parliament (MPs) of a given party.

candidate representatives — Individuals representing a candidate at the polling place to observe the voting and the counting of the ballots. Only one candidate representative per candidate is permitted to remain in the polling place at any one time. Also known as scrutineers.

centre (spectrum) — A political party or individual holding moderate views or middle-of-the-road opinions.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) — An independent officer of the House of Commons appointed by the prime minister on the recommendation of the House of Commons. The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for the administration of the federal electoral process.

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.

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

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

constituency — See *riding*.

constituent — An individual who lives in a geographically and politically defined area with an elected representative.

constitutional monarchy — A government headed by royalty. Canada is a constitutional monarchy in that the Queen is the official head of state, represented by the governor general at the federal level and lieutenant governors at the provincial level.

D

democracy — A type of government where power is held by all the people and citizens are meant to participate equally in making decisions.

department — A specialized department of the government with a specific area of responsibility (e.g., Health, Finance, Transport).

deputy returning officer (DRO) — The election official who supervises a polling station. The deputy returning officer's tasks include making decisions about a person's eligibility, counting the ballots and certifying the results.

dictatorship — A type of government where one person 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.

E

earned media — Awareness gained through efforts other than advertising, such as news coverage or external blogs/websites.

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

election — The process where citizens vote for a person to act as their representative at the federal, provincial/territorial or municipal/local level. Elections are usually held at regular intervals.

election worker — An individual who staffs a polling place.

Elections Canada — A non-partisan, independent office of the House of Commons, which is responsible for administering the federal electoral process.

elector — A person eligible to vote. Also known as a voter.

electoral district — See *riding*.

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

electorate — The whole body of electors.

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

executive branch — The branch of government that implements and enforces laws, rules and regulations.

F

federal — Referring to one of the three levels of government in Canada; pertaining to the whole country.

first-past-the-post — The system in which the candidate who has more votes than any other single candidate wins the election.

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 at fixed dates in which candidates are elected in the ridings of the nation or province/territory.

government — Refers to the governing body of a country, province/territory, city or town, which makes and administers laws.

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 — The federal body that creates, implements and enforces laws, rules and regulations for the entire country. Located in Ottawa, the House of Commons will consist of 338 MPs after the election, each MP representing a different riding.

I

incumbent — The existing holder of a political office. A riding without an incumbent candidate is known as an open seat.

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

issue — An important topic of debate and discussion.

J

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

L

left (spectrum) — On the political spectrum, one who favours policies that promote social equality, socialist or progressive views.

legislative assembly — A legislative body composed of elected members at the

provincial or territorial level. The role of the legislative assembly is to pass provincial/territorial legislation, approve public finances and scrutinize government.

legislative branch — The branch of government that has the power to create, change and repeal proposed and existing bills.

legislature — The building in which 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.

lieutenant governor — The provincial representative of the Queen and the ceremonial head of state. 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 legislative assembly.

local (government) — See *municipal*.

M

majority government — A government formed by the party or the coalition of parties holding the majority of seats in the House of Commons.

Member of Parliament (MP) — An individual elected by the people in a particular federal riding to represent them in the House of Commons.

minister — See *cabinet minister*.

minority government — A government that does not hold a majority of seats, but it

usually holds more than any other party and must maintain the confidence of parliament to continue in power.

municipal — Referring to one of the three levels of government in Canada. Municipalities are the most local level of government, existing as a result of provincial or territorial legislation.

N

new media — Refers to media content that is easily accessible, such as online sources and social media platforms. New media is typically interactive, user-driven, functions in real-time and is deemed borderless.

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

O

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

old media — Refers to traditional media sources in broadcast and print format, such as television, newspaper, radio, magazines and pamphlets/flyers. Old media is typically one way communication, delivered at a specific time, has limited jurisdictional reach and strives to maintain journalistic integrity and standards.

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

opposition party — A political party that is neither the governing party nor part of

a coalition of parties forming the government.

owned media — Internally managed promotional platforms, such as a website, blog, Twitter feed, Facebook page and YouTube channel.

P

paid media — Publicity or awareness gained through paid advertising.

parliament — The term used for Canada's federal legislature. It is also the period from the opening of the first session immediately following a general election to the end of a government's term and the calling of another election at the federal level. Each parliament consists of one or more sessions.

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

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.

party platform — A party platform is a series of declared principles and policies on jurisdictional issues concerning government and the public. Parties announce their platforms and spread their ideas in order to attract support from the electorate and, ultimately, secure votes.

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

political ideology — A political ideology is a set of shared ideals or beliefs about how politics and government should function. Common ideologies include liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism and fascism.

political party — A political party is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and similar political ideals whose intention is to achieve power through an election, form government 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 political parties and policies.

poll clerk — The official who assists the deputy returning officer at a polling place by checking to see if a person's name is on the voters list and dealing with the paperwork.

polling division — Each riding is divided into defined geographic areas called polling divisions. Eligible voters residing within each polling division vote at the polling place designated for their area.

polling place — A location to which electors are assigned for the purposes of voting.

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

premier — The leader of a provincial or territorial government. After a provincial or territorial election, the

leader of the party with the greatest number of elected members leads the government as premier. In accordance with consensus government, the premier of Nunavut and Northwest Territories is directly elected by the non-partisan members of the legislative assembly.

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 heads the federal government as prime minister.

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

R

rejected ballot — A ballot that has been placed in the ballot box, but declared unacceptable for counting by the deputy returning officer. A ballot that has not been marked properly.

representative democracy — Representatives are selected by the people through elections to make decisions on their behalf.

responsibility — A responsibility is a social force that binds you to your obligations and courses of action demanded by that force.

returning officer (RO) — The election official responsible by law for the administration of the electoral process within a single riding. Returning officers are appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

riding — A geographical area represented by an elected official. Also known as an electoral district or constituency. There are 338 ridings being contested in the 2015 federal election.

riding association — An organization formed for riding as the local organization of a political party. Also known as a constituency association.

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

right (spectrum) — On the political spectrum, one who favours conservative views and tradition. Individuals on the right believe that government should not interfere with people and businesses.

S

scrutineer — See *candidate representatives*.

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 — Canada uses a secret ballot, which means no one except the elector knows the choice that was made.

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 riding. 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.

speech from the throne — The speech delivered by the governor general for each new session of parliament. 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 separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn and exchanged for a new ballot.

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 three levels of government in Canada; pertaining to the territory.

territorial commissioner — The territorial representative of the federal government. The territorial commissioner opens, suspends and dissolves the legislative assembly, and gives or withholds royal assent to bills passed by the legislative assembly.

U

universal suffrage — The extension of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of restrictions against women, various ethnic and religious groups, and property ownership requirements.

V

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

voter turnout — The total number of people accepting ballots in an election or participating in the electoral process. Usually expressed as a percentage of the total number of qualified voters.

voters list — The list of names and addresses of all eligible electors, which is used at the polling place.

voting screen — The place at the polling station where electors go to mark their ballot in private. Also known as a privacy screen.

W

writ of election — The document signed by the Chief Electoral Officer that instructs the returning officer in a riding to conduct an election on a specific date. After the election, the returning officer signs the writ containing the voting result and returns it to the Chief Electoral Officer.