



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

**HONOURING OUR PAST,
SHAPING OUR TOMORROW**

Vote

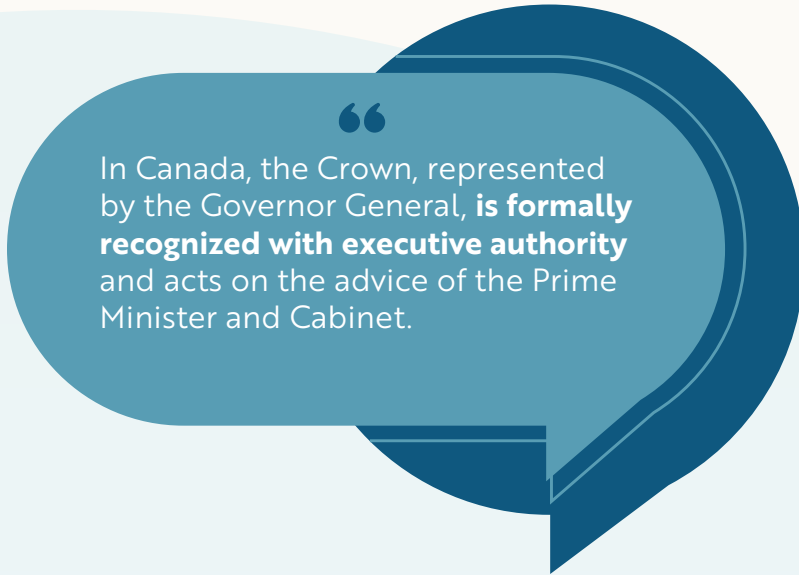
VOTING GUIDE

**The Machinery of Government
& Why Voting Matters**



Introduction

In Canada, the machinery of government is complex and can be confusing to navigate for those looking to participate in democratic processes. Due to this complexity, NWAC has developed a summary of the main functions of the Canadian political system. In doing so, NWAC hopes to support the participation of Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse (WG2STGD+) people to participate in democratic processes.

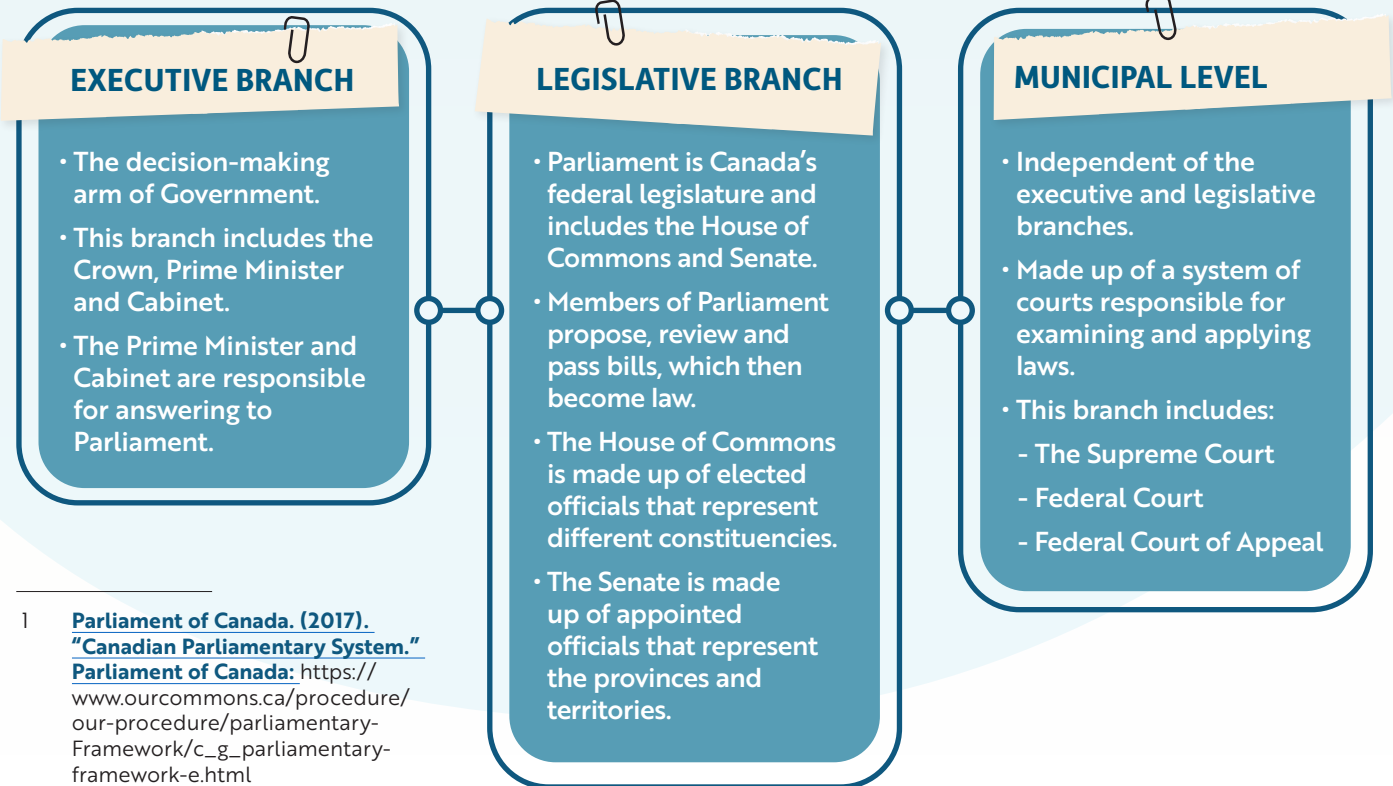


“In Canada, the Crown, represented by the Governor General, **is formally recognized with executive authority** and acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Basics

At its core, Canada is a **constitutional monarchy** and **representative parliamentary democracy**, where the government acts in

the name of the Crown but derives its power from the Canadian people.¹ The Canadian Constitution outlines the nature and functions of government, and where power is formally vested. At a high-level, the Canadian political system is divided into three branches:



¹ Parliament of Canada. (2017). "Canadian Parliamentary System." Parliament of Canada: https://www.ourcommons.ca/procedure/our-procedure/parliamentary-framework/c_g_parliamentary-framework-e.html



Further, Canada's system of government is also characterized by the division of powers between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. According to the Canadian Constitution, each has exclusive powers over the following:

FEDERAL

- Banking
- Citizenship
- Criminal Law
- Currency and Coinage
- Defence
- Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians²
- Postal Services
- Regulation of Trade and Commerce

PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL

- The Management and Sale of Public Lands
- Healthcare System
- Municipalities
- Local Works and Undertakings
- Property and Civil Rights
- Administration of Justice

As creatures of provinces/territories, municipalities manage public parks, libraries, social services, local police and fire services, garbage removal, and public transportation.

² "Indians" is a legal term used to refer to First Nations persons who are entitled to registration under the Indian Act.



THIS GUIDE

offers step-by-step voting instructions, along with actionable solutions to some common barriers.

**BEING AN ACTIVE PART
OF A COMMUNITY OF
VOTERS IS ANOTHER WAY
TO STRENGTHEN THAT
COMMUNITY.**



The Electoral Process

In Canada, the electoral process is at the centre of the political system and ensures that Canadians are represented in the democratic process. To vote in Canada, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- Be a Canadian Citizen;
- Be at least 18 years of old on election day; and,
- Prove your identity and address.

Elections are held every four years, with elections taking place on the third Monday in October in the fourth year following the previous general election. However, elections may be called earlier.

During an election, constituents have an opportunity to elect their preferred candidate to represent their riding in Parliament. Canada uses what is known as a "single-members plurality," more commonly referred to as the "first-past-the-post," voting system. Under this system, a candidate wins a seat in the House of Commons by attaining the highest number of votes of any candidate in their riding.

In Canada, political parties play a vital role in the electoral process. Political parties often bring together a group of people committed to a particular approach to governing and who pursue shared goals. Canada's largest political parties include:

- Liberal Party of Canada
- Conservative Party of Canada
- New Democratic Party
- Bloc Québécois

MAJORITY

Formed by a party that secured more than 170 seats in the House of Commons. These governments are known for:

- Stability
- A complete four-year term
- Accomplishing electoral goals.
- Easily passing legislation

MINORITY

Formed by a party that received fewer than 170 seats in the House of Commons but attained the greatest number of seats in the election. These governments are known for:

- Less stability
- Inefficiency
- Unlikely to complete a four-year term.
- Compromise with other parties.

COALITION

Formed when two or more political parties that together have the greatest number of seats in the House of Commons agree to govern together.

Coalitions are extremely rare in Canada and can only be formed following the election of a minority government.



Following the election, the party with the most seats will be asked by the Crown to form government. Depending on the number of seats won by the governing party, the winning party will form a majority, minority, or coalition in the House of Commons.

Further, the party with the second most seats in the House of Commons becomes the Official Opposition. The Official Opposition holds the government accountable for its actions, ensures that all elected voices are heard in debate, and introduces legislation.

Why Voting Matters?

By understanding the basic principles of the machinery of government, we can make informed decisions about how and who will manage the country. In a representative democracy, each vote has the same power and influence in deciding who will form government and sit in parliament. In a federal election, Canadian's have an opportunity to elect the candidate that they believe will best represent their riding. Should that candidate belong to the political party that has won the most seats in Parliament, their vote will help support the formation of a new government. In a closely contested riding, your vote could ultimately help decide the future of Canada.

Federal elections represent a significant opportunity to make meaningful change that supports the success, health and safety of Indigenous WG2STGD+ People across Canada. However, to achieve change Indigenous WG2STGD+ People need to use their voice and vote for change. Put simply, voting is the most basic way of having your voice heard.

In Canada, Indigenous WG2STGD+ People remain vastly underrepresented in voter turnout rates despite making up one of the fastest growing populations. By voting,

Indigenous WG2STGD+ People can bring attention to their most pressing priorities and shape society to reflect the future they want to see. When governments see individuals and groups mobilize, they are compelled to listen, respond, and represent the views of the community.

Your vote is one way to voice your opinion and guide the future of the country. So, why not **make your voice heard** this election?

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At first glance, “**Why should I vote?**” is a difficult question to answer; elections are rarely decided by one vote.

So, consider instead the question, “**Why should we vote?**”

