

Party Discipline

- Politicians in a party are “encouraged” to all vote the same way
- Party Whip (one per party)
 - An MP chosen to ensure members are present in Parliament and vote the party way (does not actually carry a whip)



Party Discipline

- If a party member acts against the party, the party leader can expel the member from the party
- Free Votes
 - When party members are allowed to vote whichever way they want on legislation
 - Usually on controversial issues
 - Ex. capital punishment and same-sex marriage

Minority vs. Majority Governments

- Majority government: the ruling party has more than half the seats in the legislature
 - Ruling party can basically do what it wants
 - Ex. Conservatives in 1980s, Liberals in 1990s
- Minority government: the ruling party has fewer than half the seats in the legislature
 - Ruling party needs to negotiate with opposition parties and compromise to get things done
 - Ex. Current Conservative government

Minority vs. Majority Governments

- Majority Gov. Advantages
 - Stability
 - Consistency
 - Efficiency
- Minority Gov. Advantages
 - Responsiveness
 - Accountability
 - Transparency



Coalition Government

- An option in order to avoid a minority government is to form a coalition
 - Alliance between two or more political parties
 - Often hard to keep all parties involved happy
 - Ex. Libs and Progressives formed a coalition government in the 1920s (did not last long)
- Another option is for parties to merge
 - Ex. 2003 Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservatives merged to become the Conservative Party (won the election)

Parliament Closed for Business

- Prorogue Parliament
 - To temporarily suspend Parliament
 - Can be used to protect the ruling party, stop legislation, or reorganize committees
 - Ex. Parliament prorogued before and during 2010 Olympics
 - Official reason: Conservatives wanted time to consult with Canadians about the economy
 - Opposition response: considered proroguing undemocratic, allowed gov. to avoid difficult issues

Parliament Closed for Business

- Dissolve Parliament
 - Done by Governor-General at PM's request
 - Parliament ends and an election is called
 - Reasons to call an early election
 - Vote of non-confidence in Parliament
 - Ex. 2011 Conservative Party
 - Ruling party wants to take advantage of its popularity or opponents' weakness
 - Ex. PM Chretien in 2000 when opposition not ready
 - To test if the government has the support of the people
 - Ex. PM Borden during WWI about conscription issue

Choosing the Government

- Voting Requirements
 - At least 18 years old and a Canadian citizen
- Election Basics
 - Voters choose a representative (MP - Federal or MLA - provincial) for their area
 - Each region that selects a representative is called an electoral district, riding, or constituency
 - Mean the same thing
 - Based on population (~100,000 people in each riding for a federal election)

Choosing the Government

- Federal elections are held at least every 5 years - MPs
- Provincial elections at least every 4 years - MLAs
- In BC, Municipal elections are held every 3 years - City Councilors/ Mayor



Polling

- During an election public opinion is constantly monitored
- Polling companies contact voters and ask questions about political leaders, parties and issues
- Results of polls go to parties and media
- Campaigns altered to reflect public opinion
 - Speeches
 - Television appearances
 - Debate responses
 - Candidate appearance
- Criticism of Polling: May dissuade people from voting for parties they think can't win; may lead to knee-jerk reactions; shallow?



Choosing the Government

- **Stages of a Federal Election**

1. Dissolution – Governor General dissolves Parliament, an election is called
2. Enumeration – National list of voters compiled
3. Nomination – Parties choose candidates
4. Campaigning – Vote for us, not them! Donate to my campaign fund!
5. Voting – Eligible voters cast their vote
6. Tabulating – Votes counted and winners declared

Electoral Systems

- First Past the Post (FPTP)

- Canada's electoral system
- The candidate who has most votes in a riding wins - he/she can win by 1 vote
 - Ex. Winner = Sally 2310 votes Loser = Ned 2309
- Simple and straight forward
- The more candidates that run, the fewer votes the winner must earn
- The candidate does not have to have a majority of the votes to win (over 50%)
 - Sally 51 votes, Ned 45, Gregory 32 – Sally wins

Electoral Systems

- Problems with First Past the Post
 - Parties can control a government with less than half of the popular vote
 - Much of the populations desires are not recognized in government
 - Rewards parties that have strong support in certain regions, rather than spread evenly across the country
 - Ex. 2008 Election Results: BQ received 1.4 million votes and won 49 seats, NDP received 2.5 million votes and won 29 seats, Green Party received 900k votes and won 0 seats

Electoral Systems

- Proportional Representation
 - An alternative system to FPTP
 - Voters choose a political party instead of a candidate
 - If a party receives 38% of the votes they in turn are allotted 38% of the seats
 - There have been recent attempts to change BC's electoral system to a version of proportional representation called Single Transferable Vote (STV)
 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-4_yuK-K-k

Electoral Systems

- Problems with Proportional Representation
 - Does not allow for local representation
 - Representatives chosen from very large ridings, may all come from the same area in the riding
 - Would lead to more minority governments
 - Creates a need for coalitions or alliances
 - Can lead to political deadlock and inefficiency
 - Not as easy to understand as FPTP
 - STV is especially complicated