



Canadian Politics

Outline

- Executive (Crown)
- Legislative (Parliament)
- Judicial (Supreme Court)
- Elections
- Provinces (and Territories)





Executive

Crown

- Canada is a constitutional monarchy
- The Queen of Canada is the head of Canada
- These days, the Queen is largely just ceremonial
 - But the Governor General does have some real powers



Crown

- Official title is long
 - In English: Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.
 - In French: Elizabeth Deux, par la grâce de Dieu Reine du Royaume-Uni, du Canada et de ses autres royaumes et territoires, Chef du Commonwealth, Défenseur de la Foi.



Legislative

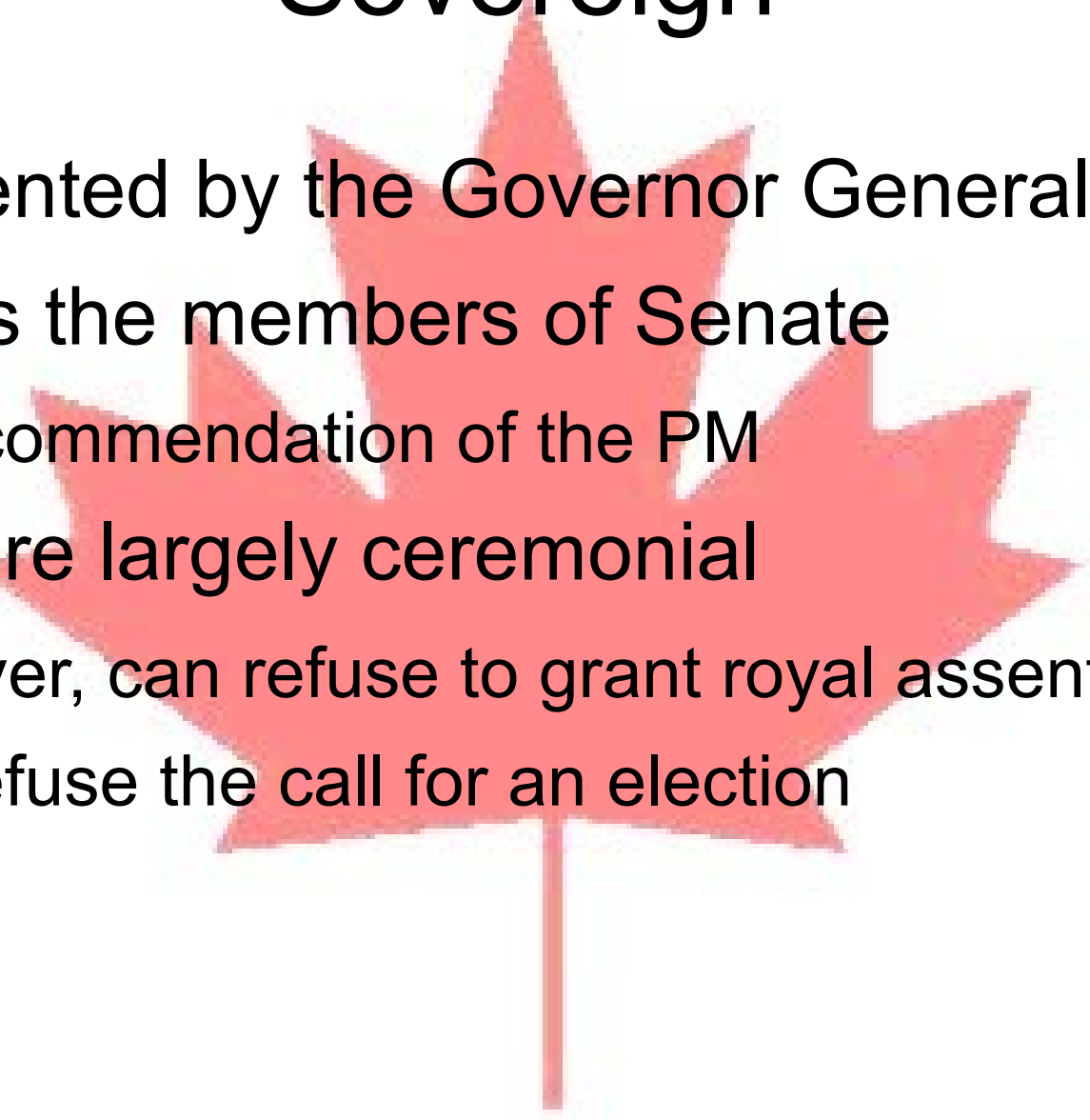
Parliament

- Sovereign (Queen/Governor General)
- Senate (Upper House)
- House of Commons (Lower House)



Sovereign

- Represented by the Governor General
- Appoints the members of Senate
 - On recommendation of the PM
- Duties are largely ceremonial
 - However, can refuse to grant royal assent
 - Can refuse the call for an election



Senate

- 105 members
- Started as equal representation of Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime region
- But, over time...
 - Regional equality is not observed
 - Nor is representation-by-population



Senate



- 24 seats for each major region
 - Ontario, Québec
 - Maritime provinces
 - 10 for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, 4 for PEI
 - Western provinces
 - 6 for each of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba
- Newfoundland and Labrador
 - 6 seats
- NWT, Yukon, Nunavut
 - 1 seat each

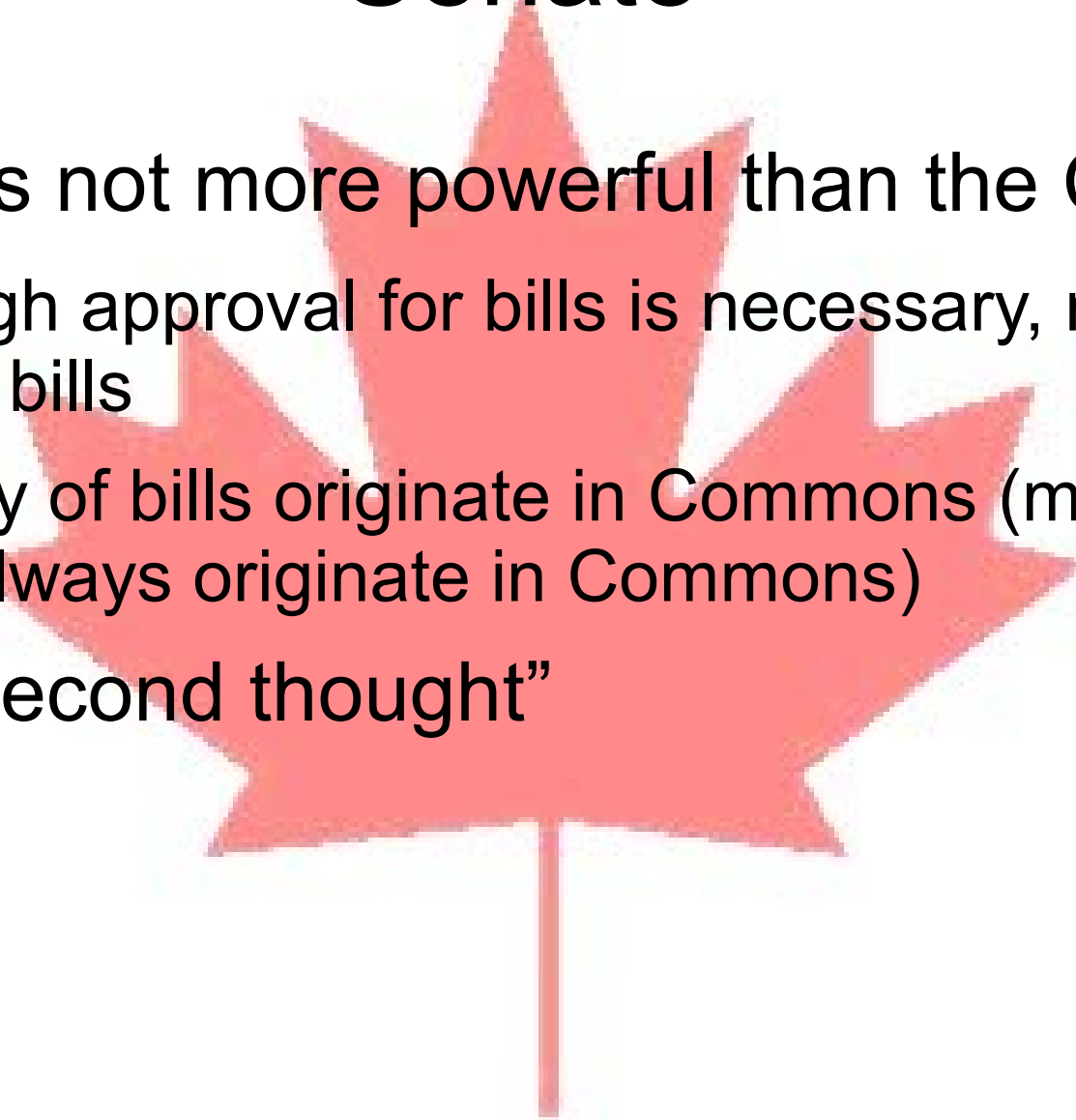
Senate

Populate per Senator (2006)

- BC – 685,581
- AB – 548,391
- ON – 506,678
- QC – 314,422
- MB – 191,400
- SK – 161,359
- NS – 91,346
- NL – 84,244
- NB – 72,999
- NT – 41,464
- PE – 33,962
- YK – 30,372
- NU – 29,474

Senate

- Senate is not more powerful than the Commons
 - Although approval for bills is necessary, rarely rejects bills
 - Majority of bills originate in Commons (money bills must always originate in Commons)
- “Sober second thought”



Senate



- The monarch can appoint up to 8 additional senators (on advice of the PM)
 - The additional senators must be distributed equally with regard to region
- Has only been used once
 - By Mulroney to pass the GST legislation
 - Mackenzie tried in 1874, but Queen Victoria denied him

Senate Reform

- Big issue in Canadian history
 - In fact, it predates Confederation
- In 1965, minor changes which made 75 a mandatory retirement age (was previously until dead)
- In 1982, Senate given veto over certain constitutional amendments

Senate Reform



- There have been 28 major proposals since the 1970s, all have failed
- Triple-E Senate
 - Equal, elected, and effective
 - Equal representation for all provinces, regardless of population
 - Effective powers to counter the Commons

House of Commons

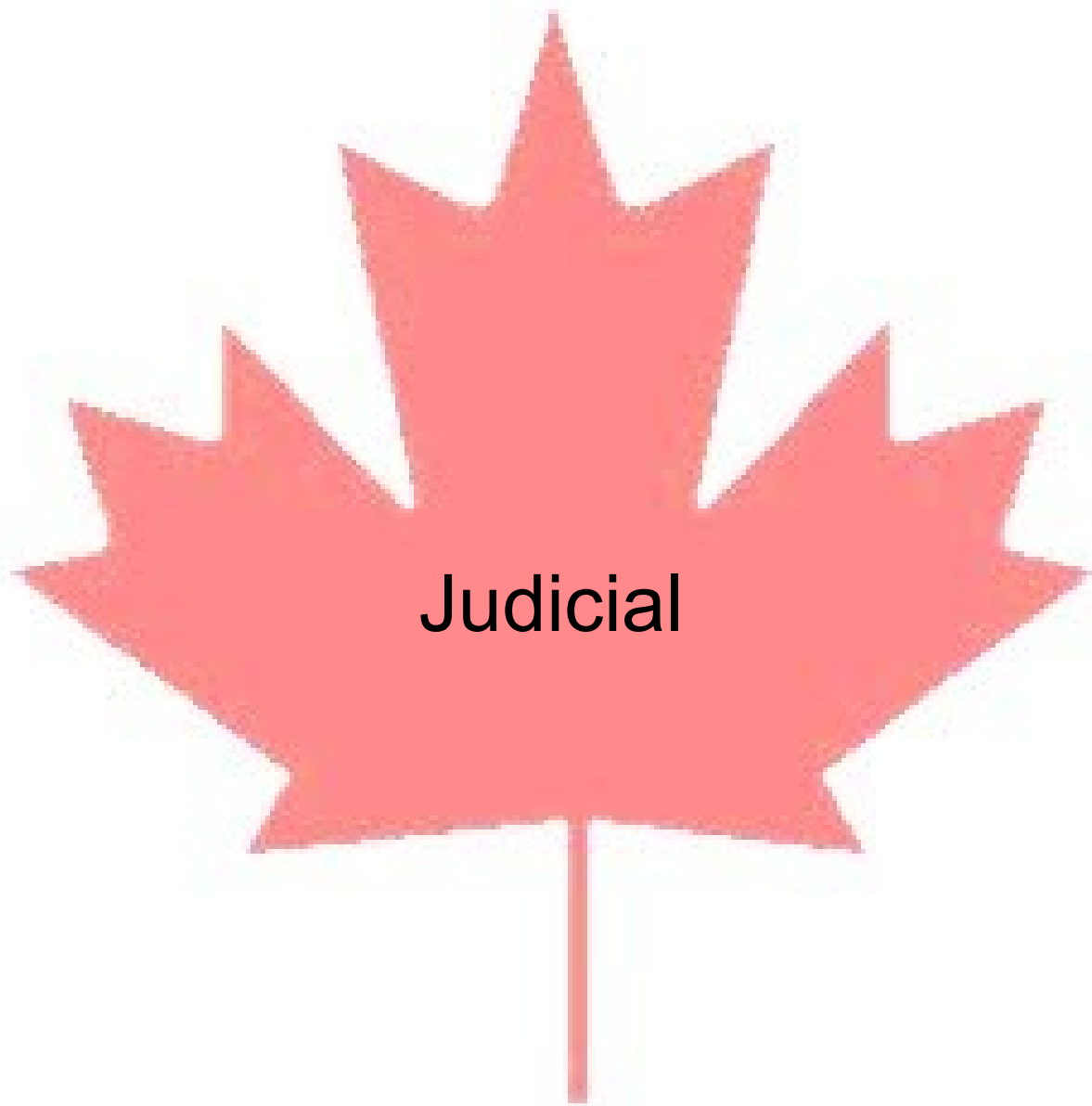


- 308 members
- Number of seats and appointment of seats to each province updated every census
 - Must be at least 282 seats, 3 reserved for the territories, the rest assigned to the provinces based on population
- Censuses are every 5 years
- Based on population changes and is roughly representation-by-population

House of Commons

Populate per MP (2001)

- BC – 108,548
- ON – 107,642
- AB – 106,243
- QC – 96,500
- NS – 82,546
- MB – 79,970
- NL – 73,276
- NB – 72,950
- SK – 69,924
- NT – 37,360
- PE – 33,824
- YK – 28,674
- NU – 26,745



Judicial

Supreme Court



- Apex of Canadian judicial system
 - Provincial/territorial courts
 - Judges appointed by provincial/territorial governments
 - Provincial/territorial superior courts
 - Judges appointed by federal government
 - Provincial/territorial courts of appeal
 - Federal courts (Tax Court, Federal Court, Federal Court of Appeal, Martial Appeal Court)
 - Supreme Court

Supreme Court



- 9 justices
 - 3 positions must be held by Québec justices
 - Québec only has 24% of the population
 - Justified on the grounds that Québec uses civil law and not common law
 - 3 from Ontario
 - 2 from the western provinces
 - 1 from Atlantic Canada (alternating between NS and NB)
- Justices sit on bench until 75

Supreme Court



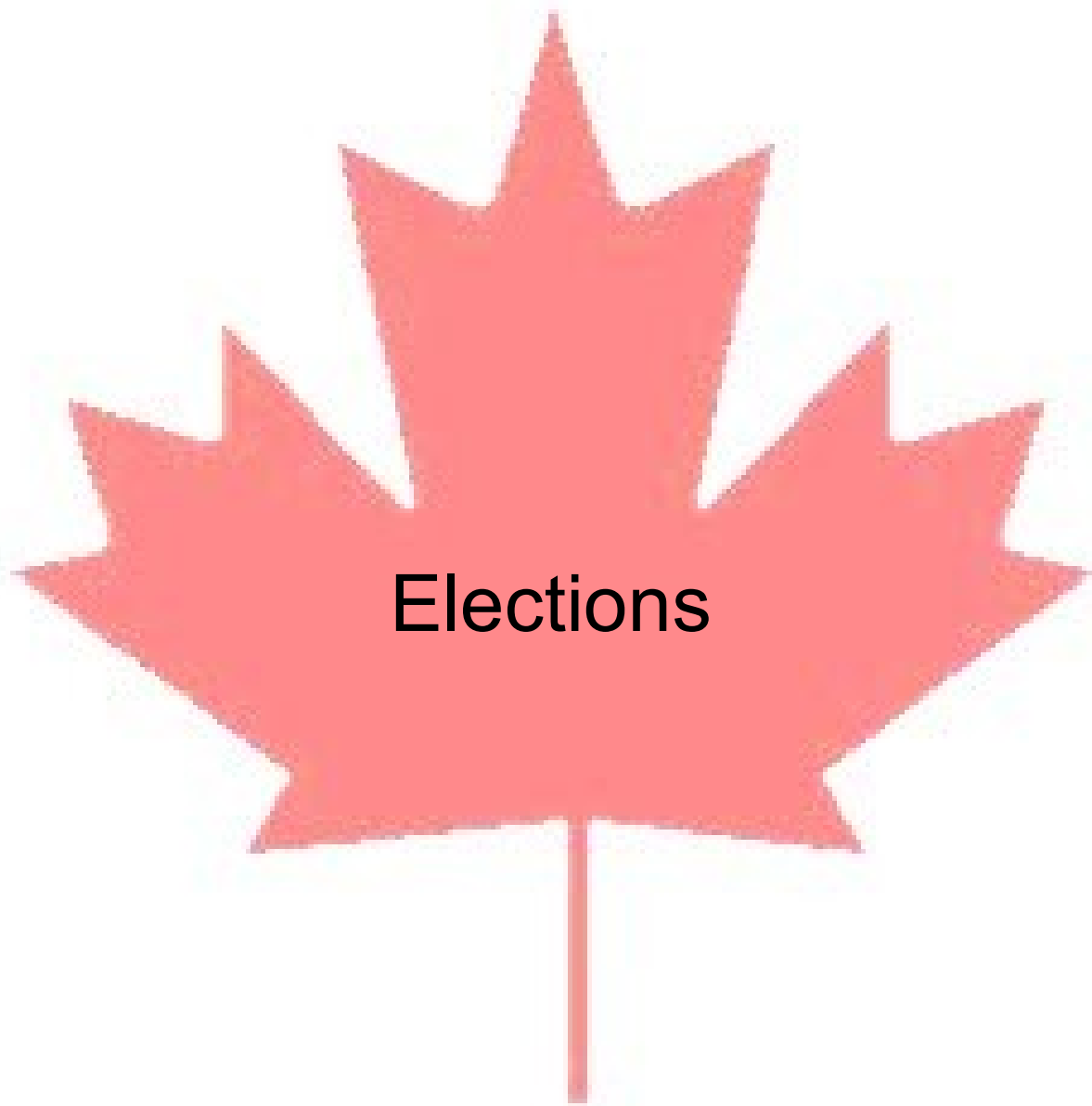
- Can be asked by Governor-in-Council (cabinet) to hear references considering important questions of law
 - Constitutional interpretation
 - Interpretation of federal or provincial legislation
 - Division of powers between federal and provincial levels of government
- Justices appointed by Queen's Privy Council for Canada

Charter of Rights and Freedoms

- Passed in 1982
- Bill of rights entrenched in the Constitution
- Protects political and civil rights of people in Canada
- Expanded scope of judicial review
 - Courts have struck down unconstitutional federal and provincial statutes based on the Charter
- Notwithstanding clause

Charter of Rights and Freedoms

- 1988, struck down Canada's abortion law
- 1998, found province of Alberta's exclusion of homosexuals from protection against discrimination violated the Charter
 - Court then read the protection into law
- Purposive interpretation
 - Concentrate not on the limited scope of the original document, but rather the changing scope of what the intention is



Elections

Elections



- Members of the Commons elected by plurality of popular votes in separate ridings
 - *i.e.* first past the post (winner-takes-all)
 - Winner does not need a majority of votes, just more than anybody else
- Mandate cannot exceed 5 years
 - Except once, during World War I
- Elections are set for the third Monday in October in the fourth calendar year following an election

Campaigns



- Length of campaigns
 - Minimum length of 36 days
 - Maximum length of 12 months
- Longest campaign was 1926 election
 - 74 days
- There were 6 elections shorter than 36 days
 - Last one in 1904, long before the minimum time limit was set

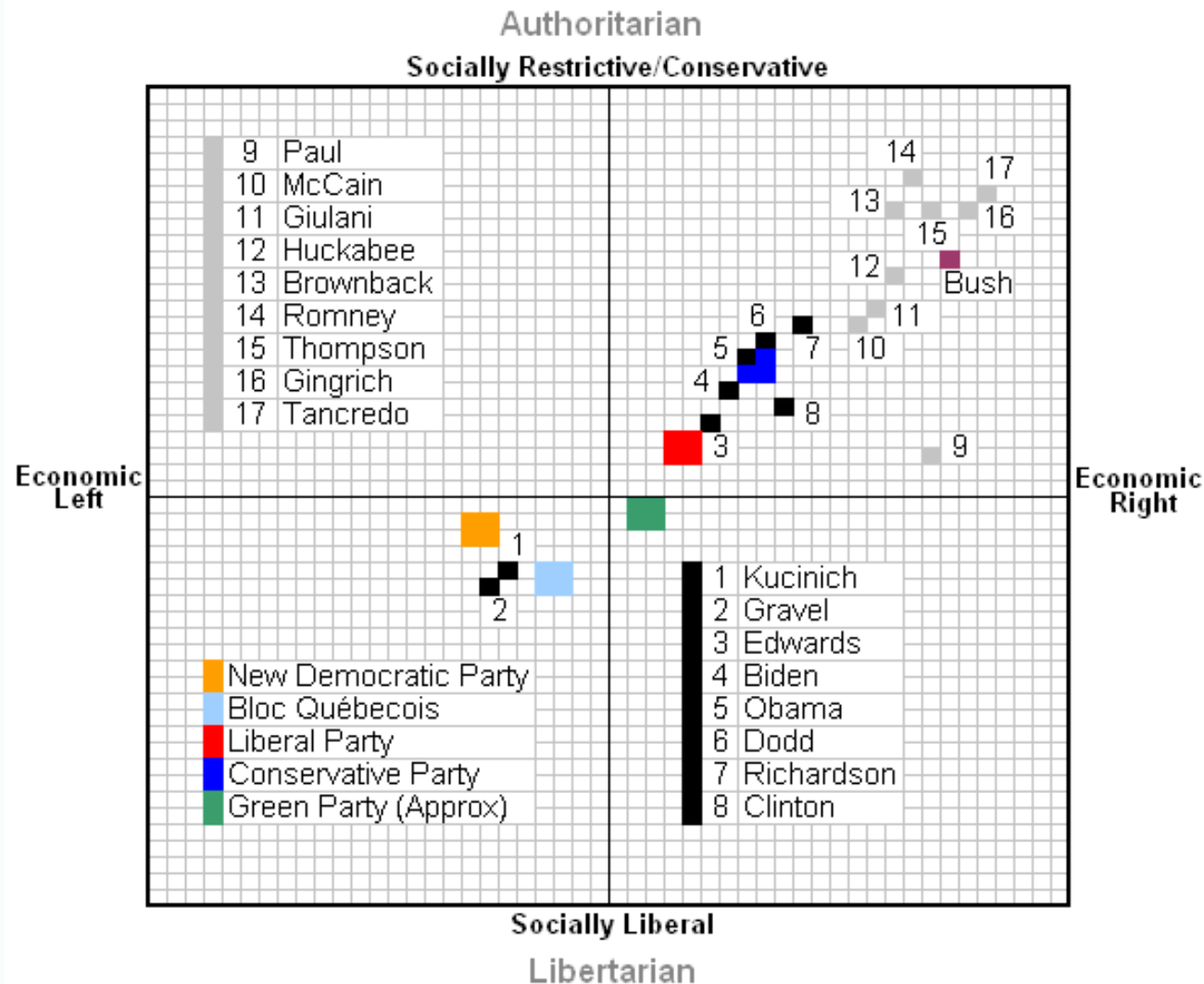
Campaigns

- Generally campaigns kept as short as possible
 - Spending restrictions set by law
 - No provisions for long campaigns
 - 1997, 2000, 2004 have all been 36 days
 - 2006 was 55 days
 - 2008 was 36



Canadian Political Spectrum

U.S. Presidential Candidates & Canadian Political Parties Compared



Recent Election

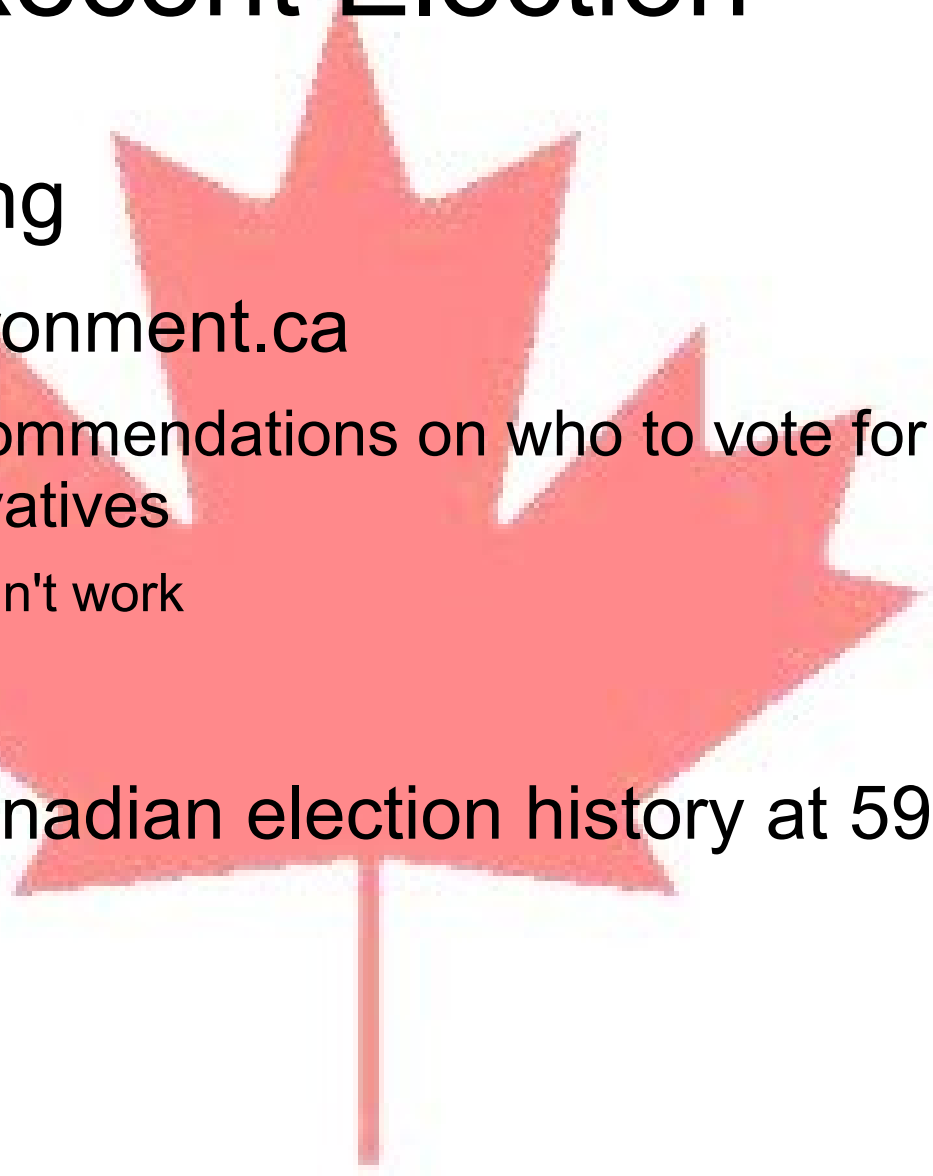


- Timeline

- February 6, 2006 – Harper Sworn in
- May 3, 2007 – Bill C-16 receives Royal Assent
 - Next election scheduled for October 19, 2009
- August 26, 2008 – Harper indicates potential election
- August – September, 2008 – Harper meets with NDP, BQ, Liberals to try to find common ground
- September 7, 2008 – Harper requests election
- October 14, 2008 – Election held

Recent Election

- Strategic voting
 - VoteForEnvironment.ca
 - Offered recommendations on who to vote for to defeat the Conservatives
 - Clearly didn't work
- Voter turnout
 - Lowest in Canadian election history at 59.1%



Recent Election

- Cons – 143 seats (46.43%), 37.63% popular
- Liberal – 76 seats (24.68%), 26.24% popular
- BQ – 50 seats (16.23%), 9.97% popular
- NDP – 37 seats (12.01%), 18.20% popular
- IND – 2 seats (0.65%), 0.65% popular
- Green – 0 seats (0.00%), 6.80% popular
- Other – 0 seats (0.00%), 0.51% popular

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canadavotes/map/2008/>

Prime Minister

- Stephen Harper is Prime Minister once again
- Sigh....





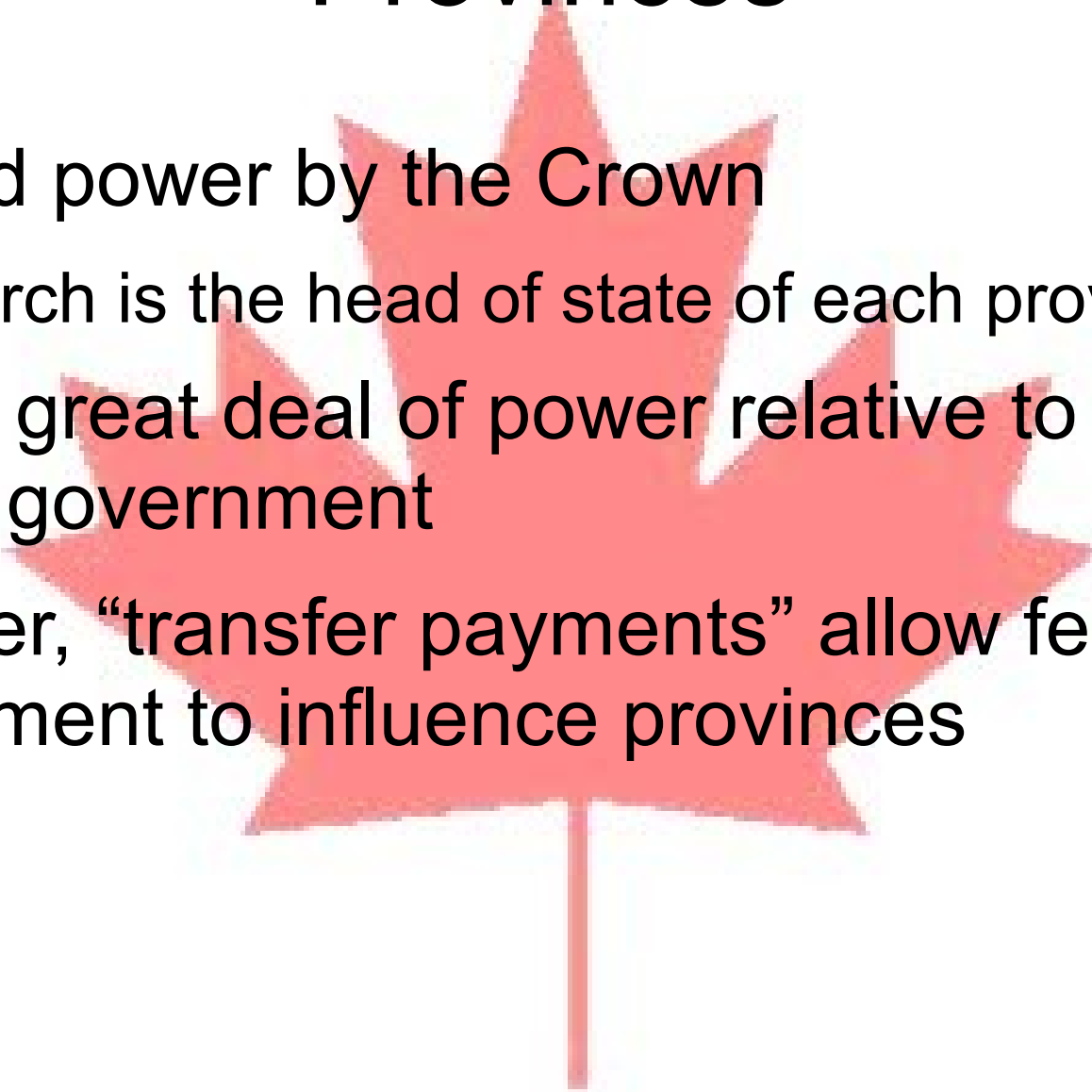
Provinces

Political Map of Canada



Provinces

- Granted power by the Crown
 - Monarch is the head of state of each province
- Have a great deal of power relative to the federal government
- However, “transfer payments” allow federal government to influence provinces



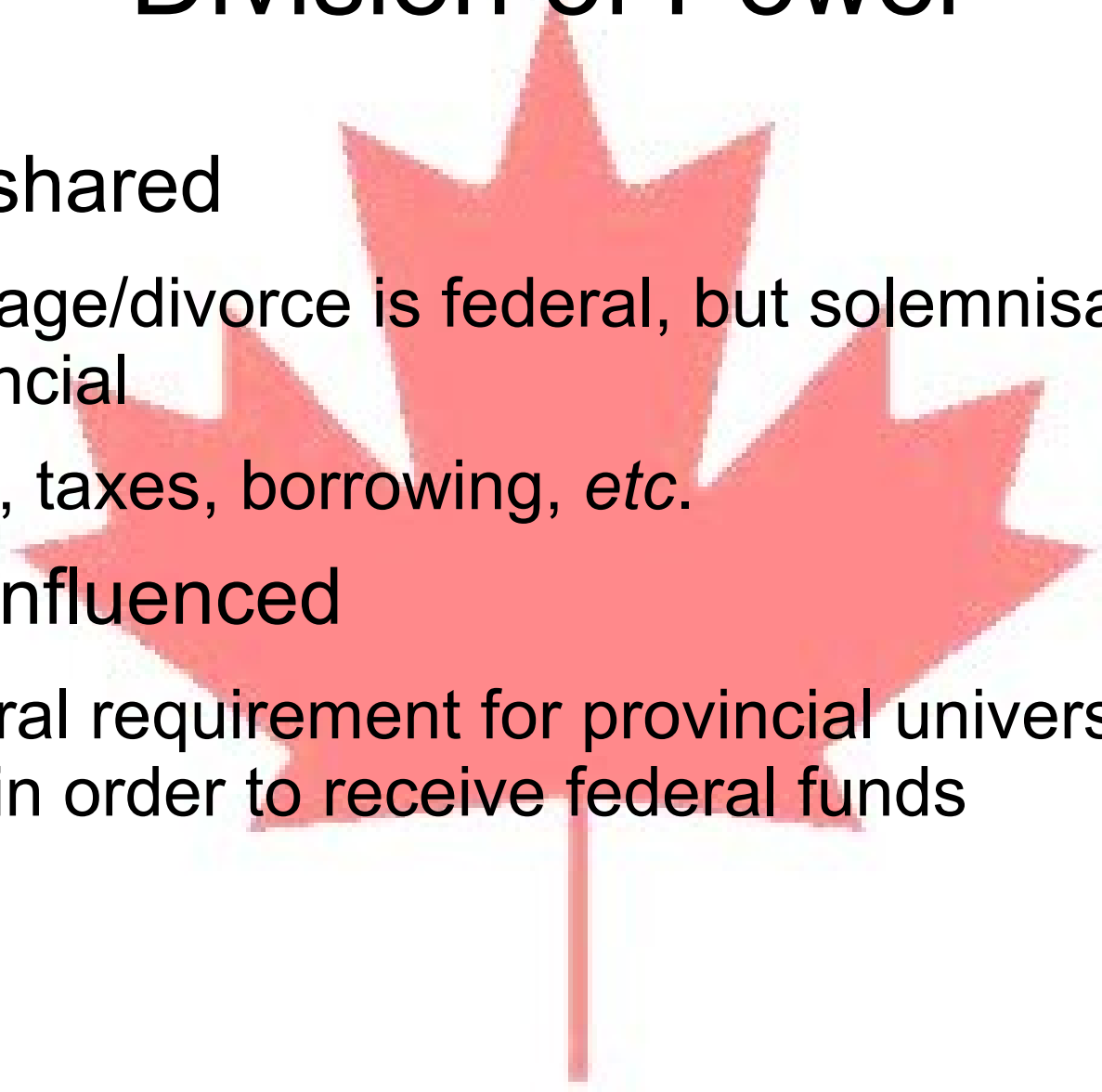
Division of Power



- Provincial
 - Property and civil rights, local works and undertaking, healthcare, education, welfare, intra-provincial transportation, local and private matters
- Federal
 - Postal service, census, military, currency, weights and measures, *etc.*

Division of Power

- Some shared
 - Marriage/divorce is federal, but solemnisation provincial
 - Laws, taxes, borrowing, *etc.*
- Some influenced
 - Federal requirement for provincial universal health care in order to receive federal funds



Legislative Assembly

- Unicameral
 - Usually called the Legislative Assembly
 - NS and NL call it the House of Assembly
 - Québec calls it the National Assembly
- Provincial elections work basically the same as federal elections
 - Single district plurality

Provincial Parties



- Usually there are provincial counterparts to the federal parties
- Not necessarily linked to federal parties
- Current Provincial governments:
 - ON, PI, QC, NB, BC all Liberal
 - AB, NL, NS all Conservative
 - SK is Saskatchewan Party
 - MB is NDP
 - YK is Yukon Party

End



Credits

- Information from Wikipedia and the Government of Canada website
- Pictures from Wikipedia articles or found with obvious searches in Google Images

